This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

MEMORIALS

OF THE

REV. FRANCIS A. WEST.

SERMONS, LECTURES,

&c.

MEMORIALS

OF THE

REV. FRANCIS A. WEST.

MEMORIALS

OF THE

REV. FRANCIS A. WEST:

BEING A SELECTION FROM HIS

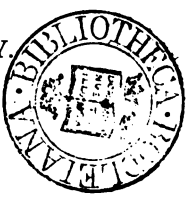
SERMONS AND LECTURES,

WITH

A MEMORIAL SKETCH BY ONE OF HIS SONS,

AND PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS BY THE

REV. B. GREGORY.



LONDON:
WESLEYAN CONFERENCE OFFICE,
2, CASTLE-STREET, CITY-ROAD;
SOLD AT 66, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1873.

100. w. 258.

LONDON :
R. NEEDHAM, PRINTER, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

MEMORIAL SKETCH OF THE REV. F. A. WEST. By one of his Sons 1

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF THE REV. F. A. WEST. By B. Gregory 38

SERMON I.

THE MYSTERIOUSNESS AND EQUITY OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT.

"Clouds and darkness are round about Him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne."—Psalm xcvii. 2. 45

SERMON II.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE. AN OUTLINE.

"Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living."—Job xxxiii. 29, 30. 58

SERMON III.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

"So also is the resurrection of the dead."—1 Corinthians xv. 42. 68

SERMON IV.

THE HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN.

PAGE

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."—Revelation vii. 13—17. 84

SERMON V.

ELI TREMBLING FOR THE ARK OF GOD.

(Preached at Great Thornton Street Chapel, Hull, during the first Conference held in that town, August, 1848.)

"And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God."—1 Samuel iv. 13. 106

SERMON VI.

THE SUCCESSFUL MINISTER. AN OUTLINE.

"For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord."—Acts xi. 24. 130

SERMON VII.

"BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT."

(Preached at the Second Hull Conference, 1858.)

PAGE

"Be filled with the Spirit."—Ephesians v. 18. . . 145

SERMON VIII.

THE DELAY OF CONVERSION.

"And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."—Acts xxiv. 25. 162

SERMON IX.

RELIGIOUS DECLENSION: ITS CAUSES AND EFFECTS.

"Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."—Galatians v. 7—9. 184

SERMON X.

PRACTICAL FAITH.

"For we walk by faith, not by sight."—2 Corinthians v. 7 . 201

SERMON XI.

THE HELP OF THE SPIRIT.

PAGE

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities."—Romans viii. 26. 219

SERMON XII.

THE LAMB SLAIN.

"The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."—Revelation xiii. 8. 235

SERMON XIII.

MEMORIES OF THE WAY.

"Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no."—Deuteronomy viii. 2. 253

LECTURE I.

THE FORCE OF EARLY HABIT . . . 285

LECTURE II.

YOUNG MEN: THEIR DANGERS AND DUTIES . 315

MEMORIAL SKETCH

OF THE

REV. F. A. WEST.

BY ONE OF HIS SONS.

FRANCIS ATHOW WEST was born at Kettering, in Northamptonshire, on the 3rd of February, 1801. His father was one of the early Methodist preachers—a man of considerable originality and strength of mind, seasoned with not a little of the salt of wit. Though literally self-taught, as he never spent a single day at school, yet he triumphed over all difficulties; and, being not only industrious but methodical in his studies, became a comparatively well-read man. He published a little volume on the Sabbath, which is still found on the shelves of ministerial libraries. His piety was sincere and unaffected; and not content with the influence of a good example merely, he, together with his wife, earnestly laboured for the spiritual welfare of his children.

Francis was the eldest son of the family, a child "greatly beloved." He was kept at home until he was eleven, and was very unwillingly relinquished to be sent to Woodhouse-Grove School, then just opened. While

there, he was the subject of deep religious impressions, and for a time enjoyed the favour of God. This experience was, however, transient, and he dated his actual conversion several years later. While at the Grove he had a narrow escape from drowning, having got out of his depth while bathing in the river Aire. He writes in a diary, which was regularly kept for some years, as follows :—

"After struggling, for what appeared to be some time, I resolved to resign me to my fate, thinking of the grief it would occasion my dear friends, and in imagination following the letter which would convey the news to my father's door. The painful sensations I experienced, recalled, even in this exigency, those words in the dream of Clarence, 'O Lord, methought what pain it was to drown!' Just at this juncture, I thought I felt something touch me, and making a hasty seizure, what was my joy to grasp the shoulder of one of my companions. But so great was my anxiety that he found I was endangering his life also, and quickly disengaged my hold. He approached again, but with no better success. Suddenly I found myself on a kind of bank, not much above the middle in water—how no one knew, and I was so blind as not to acknowledge it was of the Lord's mercy."

On leaving the Grove he was apprenticed to a druggist at Beverley, where the first two years of his business life were spent uncomfortably enough; but he completed his time with Mr. Jacob Newton of Rotherham, a brother of the late Dr. Newton, where he found a second home. The intercourse commenced with this kind family was maintained more or less throughout life, and the time of

his residence here always ranked among his most pleasant memories.

Towards the close of his seventeenth year occurred the great crisis and turning point of his life. On the 29th of November, 1818, under a sermon from Mr. Emmett, on "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves," his danger appeared to him in a light so terrible, that he determined "once more" to seek a change of heart. After relating how, for three weeks, he laboured under an "intolerable burden," he proceeds,—"On Sunday, the 20th December, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was to be administered. I had been invited to the service, and had decided to go up to the table; but while Mr. Emmett was warning us against improper persons partaking, I directly imagined myself unfit, till, in his continuation, he removed the obstacles from my sight, and I resolved to accept the invitation—a humble suppliant and sincere penitent at the foot of the Cross. It was with much fear and trembling that I first entered upon the engagement. But when the wine was being poured into the cup, the thought struck me so forcibly of its being emblematical of the shedding of blood on Calvary, that I was at once enabled to rely on the blood of sprinkling, and felt conscious that 'the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.' Never shall I forget the happy moment, the transports that filled my soul. Tongue and pen alike fail me."

It was a happy Christmas that he spent under his father's roof, with old affections strengthened by a new tie—higher, holier, and closer. At a lovefeast held on

Christmas-day, he met an old school-fellow, John Rogers, "travelling hard with his face Zionward," and they declared, one following the other, what great things God had done for them: Rogers speaking in such a manner as greatly affected the whole meeting. In the diary other remarkable seasons of grace are recorded as having been experienced during this visit, which tended much to establish him in the faith, and enabled him, so to speak, to entrench himself on the ground he had gained, and prepare for the fiery assaults of the enemy which he was shortly to encounter.

For about six months he seems to have been able to keep his confidence unimpaired. He was then appointed a Prayer-leader, and with this more active service a series of conflicts commenced, of which it is painful to read. Satan strove hard to bring him down. It was a long and weary conflict, in which he suffered cruel wounds, often losing the witness of the Spirit, and walking in darkness, and in distress so great that he speaks of more than once sitting down and wringing his hands in utter misery. But he always kept his face to the foe. "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy! when I fall, I shall arise." And this he did, with renewed hope and courage. His diary at this time is like a long April day—alternate clouds and sunshine; now self-upbraiding and bitter tears, and now a song of triumph. Prayer, study of the Scriptures, rigorous self-examination, an unsleeping watch over his own heart; it was thus that he disciplined his soul into habits that became a second nature, and were part of himself thenceforward.

In a short time he became an exhorter; and it was during either his first or his second effort in this capacity that, all unknown to him, his father's work was done, and he lay dying, having been seized with a fatal illness while on his way to an appointment. Thus, as the ministry of the one ceased, that of the other began, though as yet informally—once more fulfilling the scripture, "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth." Mr. West records that, for some days previously, he had enjoyed much sweet communion with God, great confidence in the promises, and a remarkable composure of mind. One passage especially had been so strikingly presented to him—"My grace is sufficient for thee"—that he put upon paper the ideas as they came before him. He had scarcely completed this, when the fatal tidings reached him. In those days communication was slow and uncertain, and he found himself barely able to reach home in time for the funeral. Sickness, death, and burial seemed not to follow each other in succession, but to fall at one blow.

Other afflictions at home, and the fuller realization of his loss, depressed him much. A month later he writes:—"My soul is overwhelmed with despondency, and my mind is afflicted with a gloom which it seems as though nothing would at present shake off. A dreadful stupor incapacitates me for any mental effort: I can neither think, nor read, nor write, many minutes together. Intellectual enjoyment seems banished. Added to this I have constant and sometimes excruciating pains in the head. I cannot collect my thoughts. Sometimes, in a dark

moment, I think it will end in total mental derangement, and that I cannot endure much more. But again a brighter beam breaks through the cloud. I would still love, submit, adore. O my soul, hope thou in God!"

The difficulty which he had always felt in public prayer, and still more in any attempt at public speaking, continued, if it did not even increase, and again and again he seriously questioned whether his duty lay in that direction,—whether this want of facility in public exercises was not an indication of God's will, declaring his unfitness for such offices; or, on the other hand, whether it was not a messenger of Satan to buffet him. "I feel in much doubt and darkness. I think if the Lord intended me to exercise in public, He would open my mouth, and give me words and utterance. And yet I frequently have liberty of access to the Throne of Grace, even in public. Lord! what wouldst Thou have me to do? In mercy, manifest Thy will." At this time he surrendered himself afresh to the Saviour, entering into a solemn covenant that, whatever might be the issue, he was undisputably and for ever the Lord's.

In the midst of these searchings of heart, Mr. Newton expressed his intention of proposing him as a local preacher at the ensuing Quarterly Meeting. "On this," says Mr. West, "I had such a strong conviction on my mind, such a secret influence, a something more powerful than I ever felt before, that I dared not oppose it. An impression as commanding as though it had been an audible voice, seemed to say, 'Thou must not say a word. Unless thou designest wilfully and most

grievously to sin against thy God, thou must not dare to oppose it. It is the Lord.' Under this peculiarly powerful and solemn impression, I answered not a word, except that I should leave the proposition of such a thing to his own judgment. It was in due time proposed, and it was unanimously resolved, that I should be received on trial."

Lamenting his deficiencies, and especially his scanty knowledge of spiritual things, his weak judgment and memory, he entered upon his new engagements, applying to the Lord for counsel, earnestly praying for wisdom, prudence, and all necessary gifts, and especially urging that he might be faithful to the call now given to him,—faithful unto death.

The diary here ends, and no regular continuation of it has been met with. It is a small but remarkable book, and reveals much. It is thoroughly spiritual. With the exception of the accident already mentioned, and his father's death, there is scarcely an incident of his outward life recorded in it, not even his changes of residence. It records faithfully his soul's history, and that alone ;—his sorrows, temptations, spiritual conflicts, and backslidings of heart ;—his consolations, seasons of prevailing prayer, and baptisms of power from on high. Humility and sincerity are written upon every page, and true Christian courage. With marvellous clearness is seen—all the more so that it is unconscious to the writer —how God was preparing for Himself an instrument, and (if one may say so reverently) fashioning it with care. Again and again, we see the iron thrust into the

furnace, and then beaten patiently on the anvil. "Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument, having teeth."

One cannot but note in this connection the jealous watch which Mr. West habitually kept over his own heart. No passage in the little book occurs so frequently as this, —"Watch and pray." It was doubtless by this unceasing scrutiny that he gained that rare insight into human nature which characterized him in after life, when he seemed to hold the clue to all the windings of that strange labyrinth, the human heart. And he happily escaped the morbid habit of mind, which is too often the result of such introspection. He possessed essentially a *healthy* mind, which never suffered damage in that respect, being clearly taught of the Spirit.

Another characteristic already strongly marked, was the habit of ascribing every circumstance and event of life directly to the guiding Providence of God. He was a firm believer in a *particular* Providence, and in Divine interposition in answer to prayer. And he carried out his belief consistently. Things great and small, his difficulties as a student and as a minister, domestic cares, Church cares,—no matter what the sorrow or perplexity, —he "spread it out before the Lord." And he taught others to do the same. The writer of this sketch can never forget his surprise, when a very young child, on being told to "take his lessons to the Lord." And again, and again, while at school, came the same exhortation, "Pray over your lessons, and over anything else that troubles you. Never fear that the Lord will not hear you."

Kindred with this, and indeed growing out of it, was a habit of calm and settled confidence in God, which nothing could disturb. Cut off from many friendships, he had made God his Friend, reposing in Him a simple and unceasing trust, which became as natural as any ordinary operation of the mind. But it seldom rose above this: the burden of life was too heavy for the soul to spread her wings and soar.

Being now satisfied that he was called to more active service in the Church, he resolved, with his accustomed thoroughness, to fit himself for the task. His health was delicate, so that he was rarely free from suffering for many days together. His nervousness was so great that his heart palpitated, and his knees shook under him even when praying with a few people at a cottage prayer-meeting; and almost every letter which he wrote at this time makes reference to his distress. It was more or less a trouble to him all through life, and however little suspected by others, he never felt that he had entirely conquered it. Further, his papers reveal unexpected deficiencies, and it is evident that his intellectual powers developed late, and mainly as the result of hard study subsequent to this period. After his name had been two years on the plan as a local preacher, Mr. West entered the itinerant ranks, and braced himself afresh to his work. The Bible and Wesley's Sermons at first occupied all his leisure. Then came a long series of standard authors, read and well digested, embracing especially the old Puritan divines.*

* His memory was faithful to John Howe to the last; and even

He worked hard upon other subjects as well as divinity, but they need not be dwelt upon here. He held that a minister was bound to be a master in theology, and that he had no right to be a fool in anything. Though a great reader, he was not a promiscuous one, but always read with a purpose and as part of a plan. He was also resolute with himself in mastering any author whom he took in hand, using every help that he could bring to bear upon the subject. St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans he studied with the help of all the commentators he could lay hands upon, writing out critical and explanatory notes on each verse at full length, with parallel passages, in order to fix the whole more surely in his mind. Butler's "Analogy," he dissected with almost equal care, and Paley's "Evidences." To his eldest sister he writes, in 1826,—"Perhaps you will ask, 'Are you any better for all this effort?' I think I am, for I make continual discoveries of my own ignorance, and have almost got as much wisdom as to have learnt that I know nothing yet as I ought to know. I want to be well stored with mental furniture. How some Christians, and even ministers, can maintain their piety with much time and little reading, I cannot conceive. I am learning the practice of Mr. Wesley's rules, 'Never be unemployed,' etc. I should have had to labour if not a preacher; and is this office exempt from labour? a sort of religious sinecure? God forbid! and may He grant your prayers

when unable to read, he loved to have the book open upon his knee. On the title-page were found, after his death, feebly written in pencil, the words, "the blessed John Howe."

an answer, 'that in labours I may be more abundant.'" Elsewhere he says,—"Books are more than ever my delight, and I fear occupy too large a share of my affections; for it is a cross to leave them for any other pleasure, and sometimes even for duty." And again, ten or twelve years later, when Connexional business fully occupied his time, he says,—"I enjoyed more religion when I could converse every day with the mighty dead. Religious reading seems almost essential to my spiritual well-being." And elsewhere,—"I have suffered loss by the increase of business on my hands, which has prevented that amount of reading and reflection which I find so necessary to my soul's repose and vigour." He always associated reading with prayer as a means of grace, and would say to others, "Your soul will starve if you do not read."

Mr. West's first appointment was a division of his time between the two Circuits of Lynn and Swaffham. The work was severe even for those days. The Swaffham Circuit was thirty-five miles long, by twenty-five broad, with thirty preaching-places. There were generally three full services on the Sunday, and occasionally a love-feast as well, with a journey on horseback of fifteen or twenty miles in all weathers. Add that this was "the fen country," as yet only partially drained, and that the preachers suffered severely from ague which everywhere prevailed, and it will be seen that no amount of zeal could make up for a defective constitution. At one time both the young preachers were laid aside. Twice Mr. West refers to an occasion when he expected to die in the pulpit, and there is a note of a morning service in the Swaffham

Chapel, in the midst of which, being utterly exhausted and incapable of further effort, he sat down and wept. Nevertheless, he preached the same night, but sitting, as he could not stand. What he suffered in this early period of his ministry, he says, was "only known to God and himself;" but he adds, "I have often had enjoyment in preaching Christ crucified, which would forbid my being the hearer of the most eloquent preacher. My chief sorrow is that I see so little good done. I could suffer for *this*. It has often been a comfort to my mind, in dark hours, that the seasons most barren and bitter to myself have been the most profitable to my hearers. . . . I want to see souls converted to God. This has led me in some measure to alter my strain of preaching. I am endeavouring to put both hands to the work, laying out body and soul for God, and keeping the spiritual edification of the people more in view. But I sometimes think I am giving them a dry morsel, and keeping another out who would do them more good. Pray for me. . . . I would rather die, or be cast aside, than be useless, much more be a hindrance to God's work."

After a year at Cambridge he was appointed to Hampstead, where he had more leisure, and the benefit of wholesome air, which restored him to stronger health. He was brought into contact with some of the leading men in Methodism, both preachers and laymen, who evidently regarded him as a young man of promise, and he was invited to the Poplar Circuit. While here he married Miss Elizabeth Halksworth, a young lady of considerable mental attainments, and of singular piety,

well known to his friends the Newtons. But, after four years of happy married life, Mrs. West fell into a rapid decline. Her end was triumphant, and was attended by some unusual circumstances which are narrated in the memoir which appeared in the "Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine" for 1831. This is the hour of a man's life, when, especially if he have strong natural affections, the furnace of affliction is heated seven times hotter than it is wont to be heated. He writes, "I will not harrow up your feelings, nor open again the sluices that, for one half-hour this day, have been closed; O, what hath sin done! I have contemplated the length and breadth of this affliction; and I thank God I do not murmur, nor feel any rebellion of will. . . . O, I have a sea before me, wide, stormy, dangerous! Surely, though young, I may say, 'I am a man that hath seen affliction!' Well, if we all escape the rock of perdition, it is enough. I thank God for the blessed hope I feel. I am on the Rock, Christ. I have preached much for myself, though unconsciously, for some months past. Blessed be God, my principles do not fail me now! It is a fine thing to be in the fire, and not be burnt." It was in this frame of mind that his ministry in Newcastle continued to be exercised,—in bodily weakness, but great spiritual power. Most of his old friends have passed away, but there are still a few who relate in how remarkable a manner he seemed to realize eternal things, preaching as if standing at the very gate of heaven, and catching a ray of the glory within. While in Newcastle he made the acquaintance of Mrs. T. C. Gibson, (whose memoir he subse-

quently wrote,) one of that choice band of women who have been a glory to Methodism.

From Newcastle he was removed to Leeds, where, with Messrs. Treffry, Fowler, and Anderson as colleagues, he had the pleasure of seeing as prosperous a work as that which he had just left. He formed, while here, a large circle of friends, with many of whom he remained on terms of close intimacy throughout life. Happy in his colleagues and his work, and still able to indulge his habits of study, these three years did much to mature his powers, and add fulness and ripeness to his ministry. Before leaving Leeds, Mr. West married a second time, —a union which amply fulfilled his expectations and brightened his whole future life.

While at Stockport, in 1834, he was appointed Secretary to the Chapel Fund, an office not only involving much labour, but great responsibility and anxiety. It was a time of serious financial embarrassment, a critical period in Methodist history. Many of the chapels were involved far beyond their value, and the trustees were too often themselves in poverty. Not only was the chapel property in danger, but writs of execution were threatened against some of the trustees, who ran the risk of losing their all, and of being imprisoned for debt. Mr. West's sympathies were so strongly excited on behalf of these good men, that, on the eve of an important committee, he often spent a sleepless night, remembering the scantiness of the funds which had to meet so many pressing claims.

In 1838 was commenced the noble Centenary move-

ment, of which Fund he and Mr. John D. Burton, of Manchester, were appointed co-secretaries, and upon them the principal burden lay. How cordially they worked together is well known, but the labour involved was immense.

A few of his letters at this period have been preserved. Questions affecting not only Methodism, but in many instances the entire Christian Church,—the increasingly rapid spread of Popery and of Socinianism, the rise of Tractarianism,—the attitude of Methodism towards the Church, on one side, and towards Dissent on the other,—the causes of the agitation then threatening the Connexion,—these and similar topics are discussed with great earnestness, and with a clear insight into the tendencies of things. The condition of Methodist literature, and the necessity for adapting it more fully to the requirements of the times, is forcibly dwelt upon, and some of the suggestions then made have since been carried out. One of these was a proposal for a Methodist Quarterly Review, to contain a small number of very choice papers, and to be issued at a moderate price—three shillings or less. As this was in 1844, it was certainly a step in advance. We come across criticisms of books, bargains in books (for this was before the days of reprints, and when book-hunting was an exciting and a somewhat costly sport)—*ana*, and scraps of all sorts—but no matter what the subjects of gossip, many of them amusing enough, there is always a return to ministerial topics.

It is impossible to read over these letters, which are among the most confidential he ever wrote, and where,

if anywhere, we may expect the whole man to be revealed, without seeing that religion, a deep sense of duty to God and His Church, was the ruling principle of his life. The influences for good or evil of ministerial example; the peculiar temptations of ministerial life; the question when to speak and when to be silent under the pressure of political movements; the more frequent question, how far to go in the acceptance or rejection of Circuit invitations as Providential indications; and, above all, the joyful references to revivals, or any sign of revival, wherever found, show that the spiritual fire was all aglow, and that the lamp was always burning before the altar, though it might not be visible to those without.

All through his life Mr. West was a ready and genial correspondent. He could hit off the salient points of a character, or recite a story, or describe a new country, with rare vividness, and there was a vein of humour which made his letters very lively reading. When business engagements increased, such letters became less and less frequent, and in his later years they were comparatively rare. But if trial or affliction befell any of his friends, the tenderness of his heart immediately showed itself, and no matter how pressing his engagements might be, he found time to write letters brimful of affection, and sympathy, and manly courage, and childlike faith. Not a few of these friends still remain who remember him as a strong "son of consolation" in times of bitter sorrow. Indeed, he had one of the prime essentials for this Divine work of binding up broken hearts, for he had felt the keen smart himself, and had learnt the purifying power of the

furnace of affliction, as witness his words already quoted, "It is a fine thing to be in the fire, and not be burnt."

In his correspondence with his children he was free and cheerful, very seldom writing directly *religious* letters, but generally ending with a line of pointed exhortation, or encouragement, or prayer. At times, however, when special circumstances called for it, there was a strain of tender counsel, as from his very soul. Here is one passage:—"But I would rather say, Go to God as your Heavenly Father. His is infinite compassion. He knows more of you than you know of yourself. He will not upbraid you when you return and say, 'Father, I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son.' *Fall at once on your knees before Him*, and pour out your heart before Him with only ingenuous shame and a penitent trust. You dare not say you have never known true religion, nor that it was not better with you then than it is now. But if you *were* deluded, *religion* is not a delusion; it is a reality. We are not appointed to wrath but to salvation, and that of God."*

* Part of a letter to Mrs. West during her temporary absence from home, runs as follows:—

"Having no one else to converse with during the greater part of the day, I naturally and necessarily converse much with myself. Thank God, I early acquired this habit, and it has been of immense advantage to me. It furnishes my *staple* of mental, moral, and Christian philosophy. A thousand times, when I am not suspected of tracing up things to their principles, and of analysing actions and emotions, and should hardly suspect myself, I am, in a great measure, abstracted, and am endeavouring to push my inquiries into that bundle of mysteries—*myself;* even in the free flow of convivial intercourse, and amid the burst of a good laugh, (which you know

In 1842, he was appointed a second time to Leeds; and, perhaps, at no period of his life was his preaching marked by greater power, or followed by richer results. "His liberal views and generous sympathies," writes one

I can enjoy as well as any,) I often turn aside to snatch a look at my own heart. Well, at *these* times to *study myself* is a serious affair, which seldom ends without salt, scalding tears, yet mingled with fervent prayer and blessed hopes. I know this 'cool of the day' is good for me. I survey my responsibilities, and look over my work, and read lessons of humiliation, and get back to God.

"I rarely, on ordinary occasions, close my eyes at night without a distinct reference to the sleep of death. But at these seasons, when I rest alone upon my bed, I generally indulge freely, both in thought and feeling, on this subject. My pillow can testify to tears of penitence and exultation; to fervent prayers, fearful forebodings, and joyful hopes. There are times when even the contemplation of that most dreadful of all necessary and unavoidable events is sustained with anticipated triumph; and faith in the promised sufficiency of Divine grace enables me, in expectation and purpose and hope, to bear the shock of separation from a world which contains so much that I so fondly love; and to resign to God those for whom, if I know my own heart, I would at once die to save into heaven and glory. A crowd of responsibilities, which no one can discharge as I can, (God has appointed it so,) will then come before me, and when I look at you and the dear children, O how I cling to life! I am almost tempted to repine at the frailness of my health, and bitterly regret my want of judgment, my carelessness, and the frequent abuse of my constitution, as if I had wickedly abridged days so valuable to my family, although so profitless, comparatively, to the Church and the world. Yes, I desire to live, if it be the will of God; and although my familiarity with the thought both of dying and of death must be fearfully defective and below the reality, yet I think I do not fear it. I have a far greater fear of spiritual conflicts and comparative desertion, such as I know something of, and many of God's saints have had to suffer. This I do fear, almost daily; and, God knows, I deprecate it with all my heart.

of his colleagues, "won him the esteem and confidence of the members of all Churches. The Breakfast Meeting of the ministers of various denominations was an occasion which brought into full play the catholic feelings of

"There should be a *result* from all this. Since life is so valuable, let us take care of our health. Let us learn self-denial; rise early, attend to the suggestions of experience, and use our common sense to better purpose than ever. Since life is so brief, let us improve it to the highest purposes. Let us 'redeem the time' by greater punctuality and diligence, filling up every hour with the duty of the hour. Especially let us strive better to discharge our duty towards our dear children. They will probably survive us; and the best inheritance we can leave them will be the good principles and habits which our education of them may implant and foster, and the example and prayers which our piety may bequeath them. And since life must end, and one must be taken and the other left, let us be helpers of each other's faith and joy. I regret a thousand times, and in common with thousands of Christians, that we should have had so little direct and personal spiritual intercourse, who nevertheless pray constantly for each other, and are assured of our mutual love and desire for spiritual prosperity. It is to be attributed to that form of depravity and deceitfulness of sin and common temptation which makes relatives always unwilling to communicate freely on these subjects. Their intercourse embraces so much that is merely temporal and worldly, and so large a portion of it is convivial and trifling, that, without separating a specific time and occasion, religious discourse appears incongruous, and we are quite willing to avail ourselves of the plea to defer its introduction. And then members of the same family see so much of each other's failings, that they are apt to fear a due allowance will not be made for them, and they lose confidence to unbosom themselves to each other. These are not excuses, but reasons only. Spiritual-mindedness, earnestness, zeal, danger, will carry us through all such difficulties. We must have a *time* for such engagements, and it must stand before us as a duty to be per-

his heart, and some who were present remember well with what singular intelligence he directed the conversation at these gatherings to topics of current interest."

In 1851, he removed to Liverpool, where he remained for six years. His ministerial labours both in the North and South Circuits were made exceedingly useful; but, in addition to this, his action was characterized by large Christian enterprise. He originated an extensive scheme of chapel relief and chapel building in the South Circuit. Here, too, he was a promoter of a series of very friendly and beneficial meetings of ministers of various evangelical Churches, including the Established Church, Independents, Presbyterians, Baptists, and his own denomination. The delight which these meetings afforded him was very great. At no previous time had there been such a thorough mutual understanding among the several Churches, or such a desire to work together for the common cause. In several meetings, not yet forgotten,

formed, whether we have a heart to it or not, that we *may have* a heart to it. This is the capital defect, next to a low state of religious zeal. Well, let us talk and pray with each other. Let us at last *begin to live.* I do receive you as one from the dead. Poor H——'s removal by the same complaint, and its suddenness, violence, and frequent fatality, all serve to impress me more deeply with a sense of the mercy of your restoration. It is full of lessons. May God enable us to reap them, and may He graciously prevent our good purposes from becoming abortive! Much as we have enjoyed life—and with all that we have to regret, ours has been as full a cup of domestic bliss as most—we have, I trust, brighter days in store—days gilded with spiritual joy, as the 'joy of harvest.' God bless you, my dearest, and make us mutually a blessing! God bless our dear, dear children, and make them a seed to serve Him!"

held in St. George's Hall and the Amphitheatre, in connection with the Sabbath question, the Maynooth grant, and the Evangelical Alliance, Mr. West took an active part. He also earnestly promoted the monthly meetings of the preachers of the Liverpool and Birkenhead Circuits. Indeed, he was always anxious for enlarged personal intercourse amongst ministers, whether of his own or other denominations, for mutual counsel and united work.

In 1857, he was elected President of the Conference held that year in Liverpool.

His conduct in the Chair appears to have commended him still further to the respect and confidence of his brethren, as, by universal testimony, he sustained that dignified but most onerous office worthily. The Rev. G. T. Perks writes:—"His official Sermon on 'Be filled with the Spirit,' and his Charge, founded on 'The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips,' are gratefully remembered as amongst his most successful public efforts. The Charge was singularly characteristic. It was a sort of autobiography. It reflected throughout the practical cast of his intellect, the secret of his proficiency in Biblical knowledge, and the source of his might as a preacher."

The work of the Presidency and the heavy labours which devolved upon him as Ex-President and Chairman of the London District, told very seriously upon his nervous constitution, and, after many warnings from his medical advisers, he was obliged for a time to relinquish his work altogether.

His letters throughout his life, only too commonly

indicated physical suffering, but they now began to tell of symptoms much more serious. He writes at this time to his much-attached friend, the Rev. Thomas Akroyd, with characteristic cheerfulness, though evidently struggling with disease in a new form. His correspondent was out of health, and was rusticating for a short time in the Lake district. After a little lively badinage on the nature of his holiday, Mr. West proceeds—

"And you cover all this by the pretence, that after the labours of the Conference you need it; and by the fact, or another pretence, that you have a superior soul, and can enjoy it. Well, I only wish I could join you, and teach you to be merry. Yet I think the scenery which produces a sense of profound repose, would suit me exceedingly well just now; for my head is in that state of intellectual chaos and wild uproar as to make me almost oblivious of everything, and hardly sure of the reality of anything. Dull pain, obscurity of vision, cramp and feverishness in my right hand and arm, and universal lassitude make me dull and stupid, senseless and useless. I shall be right heartily glad when Conference is over, and I can put on a loose coat, and get a sea or mountain breeze."

As the period of his appointment at Hackney drew to a close he began to feel that he was physically unable to bear the strain of another London Circuit. At this juncture the Governorship of New Kingswood School became vacant, and a very general desire was expressed that Mr. West should undertake the office. In 1860 he was, by the unanimous vote of the Conference, appointed to that very anxious position, and removed to Bath. It was with unaffected regret that he relinquished the old Circuit duty, and he clung to pulpit work even after paralysis had seriously interfered with comfort and ease in speaking. During the greater part of the seven years he re-

mained at Kingswood he was frequently engaged in Bath, Bristol, and the surrounding Circuits, preaching with his usual power. Indeed, it seemed as though the pulpit gave him new life. No matter how his spirits or his bodily vigour flagged before or after the service, while engaged *in* it he seemed to forget himself, and the old fire began to burn. It was impossible for him to sink into a dead or languid manner in the pulpit.

As Chairman of the Bath District he won the love and veneration of his fellow ministers, who testified their regard for him in an unusually marked manner at the last District Meeting he attended.

A few of the principles which guided his government of the school may be noted. First of all, he firmly believed in boys' religion — the simpler the better. Sincerity of purpose was with him a prime necessity. He did not believe in making it "worth a boy's while" to be religious, wisely judging that to make positions of trust and honour rest upon any other grounds than those of capacity, and manly and upright conduct, would be to open a broad pathway to hypocrisy. He was a strict disciplinarian, and deemed the school would be better without rules than with rules unkept. He knew well that to keep such varied and complex machinery in order, it is essential that every part shall perform its own work fully and promptly. There is a false kindness, very common in these times, which really springs from unwillingness to incur the odium attaching to the infliction of just punishment. From this error, Mr. West was in a great measure free. He did what he judged to be right,

and left consequences to a higher guidance. To some, perhaps, his strictness might at times seem to border on severity, but the general tone of the school was the best testimony to the healthiness of the system. Efficient masters always found in him a wise supporter and counsellor, and his relations with the staff, being based on mutual esteem, were as a rule singularly happy. He was always anxious to make the very best use of the funds entrusted to him. Extravagance and waste positively distressed him, but he never mistook parsimony for economy.

His duty here, as elsewhere, was conscientiously and fully discharged, until paralysis laid firmer and firmer hold upon him. At length he was obliged to give up public prayer in the Hall, and he was frequently completely laid aside. None but his own family knew the acuteness of his sufferings, or the overwhelming depression he endured for days together.

Mr. West had always hoped for strength to labour to the end. Like a good soldier, he wished to die with the harness on. He would have preferred to meet death in the pulpit, rather than in any other place. Above all things, he shrank from the thought of mental decay. But these wishes were not to be fulfilled. Increasing infirmity compelled him, at the Conference of 1867, to resign the post of Governor of Kingswood, and to become a Supernumerary. After taking this step, he wrote to his friend the Rev. John Farrar, "I have the firm conviction of reason and faith, that all is ordered by my Heavenly Father wisely and well. I have no

other ground of reliance but the covenant blood and promises. All is clear and sure, and I have a firm faith in the purifying power of the Holy Spirit to make me meet for the inheritance." He settled at Great Crosby, and it was hoped that complete rest might yet add a few years to his life. But his strength continued to fail, and it was evident, both to himself and others, that his work was done. The Rev. Owen Davies, who was to him truly as a son in the Gospel, writes :—"Notwithstanding his physical suffering, he frequently spoke to me of the pleasures of his life's evening, and words of gratitude were often on his lips. His faith was the faith of a little child, and I loved to hear him speak of his calm and unshaken confidence in Jesus. Age in his case was not dark and unlovely. I am sure he was not far from Heaven when he walked with me in the Crosby lanes." As his strength permitted, Mr. West would still write an occasional letter to some of his children, or to a dear friend. These letters, scarcely legible in places, and with words often misspelt, and sentences imperfect, show the old calm and settled faith as the habit of his mind. One of these runs as follows :—

"To Mrs. C—— and to you this [bereavement] has been a painful school. It has again enforced a common lesson of life and death. Our care is how to get on in life; our chief care should be how to enter upon another. Of late my own chief concern has been with that other life, for the state of my health plainly warns me of my approaching end. That Mr. C—— was prepared and ready is your great comfort. It is the main, in fact the only question. O, may we all be ready! I need not say it is a question which now fills my mind. It has long been with me *the* question. I need hardly

say I have gone through various doubts, and have debated every inch of ground. I am thankful for a full conviction that Christ is a Saviour, able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through Him. I am very thankful for having been educated in such a faith, and for having learnt to appropriate the promises by appropriating Christ. I trust Mrs. C— is happily supported under this great trial. She will need much Divine support. Well, if she has not as much direct comfort as is desirable, let her not cast from her such considerations as will yield comfort on reflection. These I need not suggest to either of you. Hold fast to what you know to be *true*. That will *abide*. Blessed be God, we may hang our *all* upon His word! 'All things work together for good to them that love God.' 'All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.'

"I am afraid you will hardly be able to make out my scrawl. My right hand has forgot its cunning. I mean kind and encouraging words. . . . I trust all is well. My hope is in Christ.

'None but Christ to me be given,
None but Christ in earth or heaven!'"

Paralysis soon confined him to the house, and then to his room. For some months before his death he could speak only with the utmost difficulty, and then little beyond "Yes," and "No." But there was no murmuring. Through the dreary time of enforced silence, he waited patiently till his change should come. All was calm, and peace, and security. In reply to a question from one of the family, "Is all bright and clear?" the answer was, "Yes—yes;" while the happy look expressed more than any words. In reply to a similar question from the Rev. David Hay, the answer was the same. This was a few days before his death, and then consciousness, which had long been waning, entirely failed. The sun set behind a cloud,—obscured to us, but

glorious beyond. In such a case as this, last words, however grateful to survivors, are of little moment. The work was complete, and by infallible signs. We had seen not only the full corn in the ear, but the whitening unto harvest; and the sheaf was ripe when the shadow of the reaper first fell upon it.

Mr. West was sixty-eight years of age, and had "travelled" forty-six years. He was buried at Crosby Church, the funeral being attended by many ministers and lay friends, who added this last mark of respect to their many previous acts of kindness and true Christian sympathy.

Such is the brief record of an earnest and laborious life, yet a life varied by little incident. There was nothing of the excitement which attaches to missionary enterprise, or the display of popular eloquence. It was a steady, working life, the patient industry of which accomplished much. The stewardship may originally have been that of five talents rather than of ten, but it was a *faithful* stewardship. The talents were laid out to good usury, and the proceeds were cast without stint into the Lord's treasury.

As a preacher, Mr. West was eminently practical. Having a clear perception himself, he succeeded in putting Scriptural truths with great distinctness before his hearers, discarding all ornament, very sparing in illustration, and expressing his ideas in good, homely, forcible English. The Atonement was his favourite theme, and the Epistle to the Romans his favourite text-

book. He believed in an *intelligent* Christianity, and always appealed to the reason first, though he had a great dread of stopping there. It was the heart he aimed at, and he *must* carry it, either by sap or by storm. There were times when it seemed impossible to withstand his appeals, so powerfully did they lay hold both on the reason and the conscience. If resisted, his words were like barbed arrows, which rankled long. "Probe the heart, cut deep, follow sin into every possible hiding-place, and expose it—but be sure you take the sinner to the Cross," was the advice he gave to a young minister. And, again, in his short manner, "The Atonement—mind *that!*" He considered a sermon thrown away that did not direct a sinner straight to Christ.

Mr. West's morning sermons were often rich in consolation to believers, especially those passing through suffering and bereavement. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee;" "All these things are against me;" "Though the fig-tree shall not blossom;" "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," are texts which will recall seasons of refreshing to many. There was also a sermon on the blessing concealed in the curse—the blessing of labour—which, delivered, as the writer heard it, to a crowded congregation of work-people, was an occasion long to be remembered. According to the universal rule, he preached best when he prayed most, and prayed most when he most urgently felt his need. A pious, though rather eccentric lady, the wife of one of his colleagues, was not long in finding this out, and generally called to see him on the Saturday

afternoon; after which it was no uncommon thing for her to say to her friends,—"Mr. West is only poorly to-day, bless the Lord! we shall have a good sermon to-morrow." He himself described to a friend how, on one occasion, when he had to take the pulpit at short notice, he wrestled with God for help, literally agonized—and while he was preaching, *the Spirit caught him up;* he received wonderful revelations of Divine love; he spoke with power, and the congregation heaved under the mighty influence.

One of his letters, written while at Halifax, describes a remarkable service. He says, "We have had an excellent Christmas. Our missionary services went off well. Our love-feast was the most extraordinary time ever known, perhaps, to any of us. When I came to conclude, after some pleading for sinners, and for a present salvation, the most overwhelming burst occurred that can be imagined. Nothing like the noise was ever known, except, perhaps, at an election, when the mob is determined not to hear a candidate. My poor wife was frightened enough. It was dark, and she could only hear my voice dying away under the pressure from without; and she thought she saw Mr. R— and Mr. H— come to my help, and that I had fainted. We had much good done also at the evening prayer-meeting."

The Rev. Wm. Arthur, like many others, has referred to a sermon in Waltham-street Chapel, Hull, when Mr. West preached as ex-President at the Conference of 1858. Mr. Arthur says, "Then an unction far beyond the ordinary one was given to him, and the word was sent

home with a power none could help feeling, or so feeling, could easily forget. To all it seemed like some token of heaven upon earth, some gleam of returning Pentecost to the Churches. It was the only time in my life that, after having freely wept in the house of God, I, on leaving it, was forced again to burst into weeping in the open street."

It was supposed by many, and especially by those who heard him for the first time, that Mr. West was a *memoriter* preacher. His words were always "fitly chosen," but few men have been more truly *extempore* speakers. The back of a Society ticket sometimes contained all that he ever wrote of a sermon. More commonly a card double the size contained his syllabus, of these some hundreds remain. When quite at ease he would frequently follow the inspiration of the moment, altering entirely the previous plan of his sermon, sometimes unable afterwards to recall the train of thought which had been clear enough to him in the pulpit. He was peculiarly susceptible to external influences — a strange congregation, or a dead-alive congregation, or the fancied presence of some colleague in the ministry, would embarrass him painfully. Or, on the other hand, with an attentive and devout congregation, there would be immediate sympathy, and gathered strength—the holding up of the prophet's hands, as by Aaron and Hur.

The fervour, variety, and freshness of his prayers ought not to be overlooked. They revealed the secret of his strength. There could be no such power in the pulpit had there been no earnest pleading in the closet. His attitude in public prayer was peculiarly that of a priest—

the mouthpiece of his people. Their sins, their sorrows, their burdens he gathered up on every side. If you came to the service oppressed by some special trouble, in all probability you found yourself in some unexpected way represented in the general intercession. And at times it was mighty intercession indeed. If one may use the figure, he would seem to enter into the holiest of all, and there plead the merits of the Eternal Sacrifice, until, illumined with the glory of the Divine presence, he would return with blessings in his hands for the assembled worshippers.

Mr. West's administration of the Lord's Supper was very impressive and solemn. Its repetition as a ministerial act never degenerated into formality. To him it was always spirit and life, and his own mode of partaking of the emblems was as though in the visible presence of his Saviour. It gave a tone to the whole service, and the words of exhortation, which he very occasionally uttered during the administration—brief, thoughtful sentences—will be easily recalled by many of his former congregations.

He always attracted the young people of his Circuits, and not only gained, but retained their affection,—a sure sign of a kindly nature. His interest in them prompted him to extra efforts on their behalf, and in most of his Circuits he instituted Bible-classes, which he worked diligently. While bent on making these meetings as interesting as possible, he always kept them at a high level; and though his style was thoroughly familiar and conversational, with a gleam of pleasantry here and there, his pupils found that it was no child's play in which they were

engaged, and that they must put forth their best energies if they would keep pace with their teacher. In Newcastle, Leeds, Halifax, and Liverpool, these Classes were particularly important, and furnished many leaders and local preachers to the several Societies.

The syllabus of a course of Lectures addressed to Sunday-school teachers is as follows :—

Subjects for Lectures (on Thursday evenings, at eight o'clock, in Mount Pleasant Chapel Vestry) to the Sunday-school teachers in Liverpool South Circuit, designed to prepare for school lessons on the following Sabbath.

Jan. 7. *A great cure brings many patients.* Matt viii. 2—4 ; Mark i. 40 to the end ; Luke v. 12—15.

„ 14. *Where there's a will there's a way.* Matt. ix. 2—8 ; Mark ii. 1—12 ; Luke v. 17—26.

„ 22. *Troubled waters healing waters.* John v. 1—16.

„ 29. *Taking another's not always stealing.* Matt. xii. 1—8 ; Mark ii. 23.

Feb. 5. *Two hands unlike made alike.* Matt. xii. 9—13 ; Mark iii. 1—5 ; Luke vi. 6—10.

„ 12. *Great doings with little noise.* Matt. xii. 15—21 ; Mark iii. 7—12.

„ 19. *The Heathen for once greater than the Jew.* Matt. viii. 5—13 ; Luke vii. 1—10.

„ 26. *The only son of his Mother.* Luke vii. 11—18.

Mar. 5. *The Servant in prison, and the Master at large.* Matt. xi. 2—15 ; Luke vii. 18—30.

Mar. 12. *Very sinful, very penitent, very happy.* Luke vii. 36 to the end.

„ 19. *A great fact and a great puzzle.* Matt. xii. 22—45 ; Mark iii. 19—30 ; Luke xi. 14—28.

„ 27. (Friday) *A figurative sermon and a literal application.* Matt. xiii. 1—9 ; Mark iv. 1—9 ; Luke viii. 4—8.

April 2. *Many illustrations of one subject.* Matt. xiii. 24—53 ; Mark iv. 26—34.

„ 9. *A great storm and little danger.* Matt. viii. 18—27 ; Mark iv. 35 to the end ; Luke viii. 22—25.

„ 16. *One man possessed and many swine lost.* Matt. viii. 28 to the end ; Mark v. 1—20 ; Luke viii. 26—39.

April 23. *The Master dines with the servant.* Matt. ix. 10—17; Mark ii. 15—22; Luke v. 29 to the end.

,, 30. *The dying live, and the living are healed.* Matt. ix. 18—26; Mark v. 21 to the end; Luke viii. 40 to the end.

May 7. *The blind see and the dumb speak.* Matt. ix. 27—34.

,, 14. *Twelve preachers ordained at once.* Matt. x; Mark vi. 7—13; Luke ix. 1—6.

,, 21. (District Meeting. Ministers out of town.)

,, 28. *The life of the greatest Prophet a prey to a dancing girl.* Matt. xiv. 1—12; Mark vi. 14—29; Luke ix. 7—9.

June 4. *Little for many, yet plenty to spare.* Matt. xiv. 15—21; Mark vi. 35—44; Luke ix. 12—17; John vi. 3—15.

,, 11. *Firm waters to firm hearts.* Matt. xiv. 24—33; Mark vi. 47—53; John vi. 16—21.

,, 18. *Many sick and all are healed.* Matt. xiv. 34—36; Mark vi. 53 to the end.

,, 25. *Common bread, and bread from heaven.* John vi. 22 to the end.

THURSDAY Evening is adhered to as strictly as possible. The Class is open to all young people, whether Sunday-school teachers or not.

It is quite characteristic that Mr. West's own name does not appear. Even the explanation of the blank evening is given in the plural form, he regarding it as a matter in which his colleagues had a joint interest with himself. Surely in this charity which "seeketh not her own," there is a Bible lesson for us all!

As a man of business he rendered great services to the Connexion, which have been always generously acknowledged. In committee he went to the root of the business, was clear and explicit in his statements, fair in discussion, and by keeping closely to the matter in hand, economical of his own time and that of others. As a secretary, he was expeditious and industrious,

and for many years got through a mass of work which would have been considered full duty for an ordinary man of business, apart altogether from ministerial work, which was never interfered with.

An ardent lover of books, he acquired a large and carefully selected library at a time when books were scarce as compared with to-day. Like most men of extensive reading, he had a *refined* taste, and he had, naturally, an *eclectic* taste. In his library, theology, of course, predominated; but there was ample store of general literature, to which additions were regularly made. Outside books, painting, sculpture, some of the sciences, especially mechanical science, had great attractions for him, and he contrived to gain some knowledge of them all.

He was gifted with a quick eye and a ready comprehension, and long habits of observation enabled him readily to lay hold of new facts; added to which he had the spirit of a workman, being himself accustomed to handle tools. Natural scenery had for him untiring charms, no matter what the season of the year; and the Divine resources as manifested in creation, and the Divine mercy to man in writing so faintly the letters of the curse upon the material world around him, were favourite topics. This love of nature survived as long as he had power to observe, and the last time that he left his room was to be supported with difficulty to the top of the house, in order to look out once more on the glory of a sunset.

He had largely the gift of humour, a quality which he looked upon as invaluable to a man—brightening up and relieving the monotony of life, and worth more than

gold and silver. When in moderate health he was always buoyant and cheerful, and carried his burden gaily. His powers of sarcasm were immense; and when the thing came in his way, few men could prick a wind-bag more adroitly. But, as a rule, he exercised strong control over himself in this direction, knowing the strength of the temptation which such powers always create.

Still, it must be conceded that there was a harsh side to his character. A nervous irritability, increased by neuralgic pains, often made him impatient and testy in manner, with an occasional sharpness of speech, which was doubtless often attributed to mistaken causes. He required to be known, as is the case with most men who have any individuality of character. But, once known, there was no room for further doubt. What had seemed a frosty barrier proved to be only a film, which the first warm breath of friendship thawed away, and, once gone, it was gone for ever. His heart knit firmly to a friend, and there was to him a peculiar sacredness in the tie. The interval of absence, or even of communication, might have been long—as in busy lives it must often be—but the intercourse was renewed just as though interrupted yesterday. And his friendships included many of other Churches. While holding strictly to Methodist doctrine, he was liberal in his religious views, and catholic in his sympathies. He left very much to the individual conscience, and with regard to diversities of creed, he preferred rather to look at the points of agreement than of difference.

In short, he was a manly man. Simple, direct, modest,

but courageous and independent; true to the very core, far more strict and severe towards himself than towards others; such he appeared to us, before whom he went out and came in, who saw him under all the many aspects of his character, and under continual changes of circumstance; who always respected him, often admired him, and have loved him truly all our lives. His piety was of the same robust type. The reverse of sentimental or emotional, it was deep-seated and truly practical. His own words are: "I bless God that He has given my mind a natural tendency to lean *on principles;* and though I have to grope and grapple in great darkness and with much toil till I reach them, yet afterwards I have great repose—a blessed sense of security. It seems as if an impregnable wall was thrown around me. 'My heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.'" This was written when a young man, but it was true of him all through life. To this anchorage he clung more closely as his powers failed. His views of himself became more and more humbled towards the close of life. On one occasion, after an unusual silence, and in evident depression of mind, he said to a friend, with tears in his eyes, "*I dread the judgment;*" adding, "I have had lately such views of my own heart that I tremble to open it to the eye of God. But," said he, looking up, and smiling through his tears, "I have a *Divine Saviour.*"

As showing his settled frame of mind, while conscious of the rapid approach of death, the following document may be quoted. It was written after disease had made serious inroads on his constitution, and when both body

and mind were much shaken. Yet it will be observed that there is not the shadow of doubt or hesitancy in its tone :—

"I do hereby solemnly give my immortal soul wholly into the hands of my precious Saviour, Who, by His voluntary humiliation in my nature, did graciously undertake to redeem it, by suffering (in its room and stead) the just and deserved penalty of the righteous law; dying for my sins, the Just for the unjust. And, in token of His having perfectly satisfied the law, He rose again from the dead, and ascended to the right hand of God, pleading the merit of His death on my behalf. On that death do I ever rely, both now and in the last day. This is my exclusive plea. Into His hands, with simple trust and hope, assured of His faithful promise, I cast my guilty soul, having no other hope, and yet having no fear or doubt. To His love I am indebted for all my enjoyment and all my hopes. To Him I ascribe all merit, and all grace. I *have* nothing, I *am* nothing. I gladly ascribe all to Christ. In the matter of my salvation He is all in all, eternal life. To Him I give the glory of my salvation, and that He has kept me in the measure of His grace for so long a time. To me He has committed His Gospel to preach to others, often with His conscious approval and blessing; oftener had I been more diligent and faithful. The Lord pardon my sins in this solemn respect."

These were almost his last written words. Let them be the last mentioned here. The Saviour's name, and the Saviour's praise, and the sinner's plea, will most fitly close this record of a devoted life.

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF THE REV. F. A. WEST.

By B. GREGORY.

FEW men in the long roll of Methodist worthies have attained to such an equable efficiency as FRANCIS A. WEST. We have had ministers of more towering eminence, of more brilliant or commanding pulpit power, of a more palpable and direct success in winning souls to Christ, more formidable in debate, more conspicuously marked out for leadership; we could point to here and there one of a broader, richer, deeper scholarship; but Methodism can boast of few sons who have filled so worthily every post from the humblest to the highest, and have in every department of our multifarious and talent-taxing system evinced such a uniform and calculable capability. What were the elements of his effectiveness? What the secret of his success?

The rare modesty and sensitive self-distrust of the writer of the foregoing tasteful sketch, and the resolute restraint put upon his filial fondness and veneration, have made him stop short of full justice to the virtues and talents of his distinguished father. He has himself expressed an earnest wish that some one would indicate the omitted lineaments of his father's intellectual and spiritual contour. Having for a period of three and thirty years enjoyed frequent opportunities of studying

Mr. West's strongly marked personality, and finding, on reflection, that one had been, in fact, unconsciously studying him with keen interest at every interview, it may not be presumptuous to attempt a little filling in and a slight extension of the delicate and graceful etching by his eldest son. In truth, Francis A. West was a figure to attract attention and demand estimation. Seeing him for the first time in a group you would single him out as not at all a common man. You would say to your neighbour or yourself, "Who is that pale, sallow, keen-eyed man, with the chiselled features and exquisitely neat costume?" The first impression one received was that his was a highly strung nature, animated by a self-controlling intensity. There was a severe tension in the muscles of his face. His bearing was at first rather repellent than attractive. He looked through you at a glance, and seemed to take your intellectual and moral measure in a moment. His tones were hard and dry, and his address cool and undemonstrative. His countenance was "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." The nice propriety of his dress and his well-brushed, carefully-arranged hair, showed that minute attention to personal appearance which is commonly attributed to self-respect, but in his case was rather indicative of deference to the public gaze. In society he could, on occasion, be as severe with others as he was habitually with himself. The improprieties or slovenly inadvertencies of others caused him a feeling of annoyance which he was not always careful to conceal. In correcting a fault, his own or another's, he cared much more about the *fortiter*

in re than the *suaviter in modo*. He was not seldom sarcastic in speech and sardonic in look. At Woodhouse-Grove he was a dreaded examiner, and a searching committee-man.

The basis of his character was a deep, stern, solemn sense of individual responsibility. He evidently felt that we are brought into the world to *become* and to *effect*, and that we leave it to be judged and finally classified. This was vividly apparent in the first sermon I ever heard him preach—the annual sermon to the boys at Woodhouse-Grove School. His text was: "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." He dwelt with great tenderness on his own "Grove-days," his religious enjoyments and ardent pursuit of knowledge during play-hours, instancing Joyce's "Scientific Dialogues" as one of the favourite books of his boyhood. He set before us, what he had obviously set before himself, a high standard of excellence and efficiency, of attainment and of service, of struggle and success, under "the Great Taskmaster's eye." The principle and sentiment of *duty* was the keystone of Francis A. West's character.

During the second decade of his ministry, at least, (1832—1842,) Mr. West was an eager and adventurous intellectual explorer. He took the keenest interest in the exciting intellectual and religious controversies of the time, from Tractarianism, on the one hand, to Channingism, Carlylism and Emersonianism on the other. His orthodoxy was not born of tameness and

timidity. He delighted in the free, full and fearless discussion of great spiritual problems, in the light-striking collision of mind with mind, in keen argumentative encounter, especially with the cool daring of his friend George Morley of Leeds, and the chivalrous catholicity of his friend Hardwick of the same town. In truth, with all his spiritual power in the pulpit he was at that time, by reason of his frank and sometimes eager social ventilation of difficult religious questions, "a shaking of the head among" some very earnest and not at all narrow or strait-laced people. But his safeguards were—his thorough mental and spiritual assimilation of the choicest English divinity—Puritan and Anglican—for he had fed upon the finest of the theological wheat; his deep religious experience, his devout, practical, and methodical habits, his acute conscientiousness and unaffected love of truth, and his severe and almost continuous bodily sufferings. But whilst he felt it to be his duty to think and let think, he betrayed none of the light-headed self-assertion which despises the rich heirlooms of human thought in favour of a specious and audacious novelty. He had, in fact, little patience with young men who, ignorant of the grand masterpieces of theology, loved to parade the showy and ephemeral dogmas of the day.

Although Mr. West was not naturally of a facile disposition, and although his temperament was somewhat saturnine, and he seemed to have been subjected in early life to a system of stern repression, yet in congenial company he was most winning and attaching. He talked well, though he was rather piquant than brilliant. Surprise

lent a special charm to the genialities of a personage who at first sight seemed so unbending. His warm interest in the young, his enthusiastic recognition of intellectual and spiritual promise, which had more of the tone and manner of deference and homage than of patronage or condescension; his exuberance of caustic humour; his free indulgence in word-play; his store of anecdote and apologue; the license which he would at times allow himself in his strictures on Methodist magnates and their policy (not always with due regard to the juvenility of listeners), his communicativeness and grim comicality, approaching at times to *abandon;* the perfect good humour with which he could take as well as give a hard hit; his readiness and even eagerness to learn whatever even a young companion might have to teach; his manly admiration of female excellence—all these and a thousand other traits of heartiness and thoroughness, cast a strong spell upon those who enjoyed the privilege of frequent intercourse with this energetic and laborious minister. These qualities owed much of their fascination to their conjunction with antithetical qualities, which gave a piquancy to gentle virtues; a new solution to the ancient riddle, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."

Mr. West's genuine catholicity and his power both of cultivating and inspiring the truest, closest friendship have been delicately and faithfully touched upon in the preceding sketch. But the first glimpse I personally gained of the real lovingness and loveableness of Mr. West was caught from his beautiful and touching tenderness

to his brother, a charming man, not without a dash of genius, but for the most part presenting a very marked contrast to the rigid regularity of the subject of these reminiscences.

It is not necessary to add much to Mr. F. H. West's modest but discriminating characterization of his father's preaching. The sermons contained in this volume give a fair specimen of the staple of his ministry, but it should be borne in mind that although there was nothing oratorical in Mr. West's delivery, which was ordinarily staid, sedate and restrained rather than impassioned, yet they owed much of their effect to the calm earnestness and unobtrusive reality of the preacher, and above all to the Divine influence by which they were attended. His consciousness of this was the reason why he so steadily resisted the requests of his hearers to publish sermons which had made a deep impression. Thus to an urgent entreaty from friends at Bedford to print a sermon which he had preached there on "Restore unto me the joys of Thy salvation," etc., he replied, "I cannot print the unction." Yet much unction is in the spared MSS.; let us hope that it will not be crushed out by the press. Very often, in the regular course of his ministry, his internal fervour rose gradually to a white heat, lighting up his countenance with a spiritual incandescence.

That Mr. West's simplicity and severity of style did not result from barrenness of imagination, is plain, not only from frequent scintillations in the sermons contained in this volume, but also from his sermon published in "The Pulpit," with an editorial note calling public

attention to him as a young pulpit orator of the highest promise, when he was yet a probationer, stationed at Hampstead. The text was, "Eye hath not seen," etc. It is a fine specimen of genuine juvenile eloquence, and indeed of imaginative and decorative pulpit oratory. It abounds in pomp and garniture.

But, after all, he was not so much a man of genius as of general ability. His powers were of the class which mature slowly, distinguished by sober sense and sound practical judgment. This was especially apparent on the platform and in the chair of the Quarterly or Local Preachers' Meeting, or of the District Committee. To expose the ignorance of a self-confident, conceited candidate was to him a vivid pleasure. On such occasions the passage which his son applies to him was especially appropriate, "a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth."

But he formed by no means an overweening estimate of his own abilities. He was fond of affairs and took delight in details, but he was to the last self-diffident; perhaps most so towards the last. The true tenderness of his heart was affectingly manifest when he was in the Chair of the Conference. When called to pronounce censure on an erring brother his emotion was very strong. The duty was evidently exquisitely painful to him. Indeed, all apparent harshness and impatience was with him, as with many other good men, the result of an overwrought nervous sensibility. But this is admirably treated in the preceding sketch. Any further remarks would only be a rude repetition of his son's well-worded testimony.

SERMONS.

SERMON I. — THE MYSTERIOUSNESS AND EQUITY OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT.

"Clouds and darkness are round about Him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne."—Psalm xcvii. 2.

THAT the Lord reigns, is a primary truth of religion. Every nation thus acknowledges a Supreme Power. Yet the subject is confessedly full of difficulties. Acute sceptics and querulous sufferers only express the ordinary objections which occasionally startle or disturb the minds of all who think. The rebellious heart is not subdued by an intellectual conviction; and a bruised spirit is little soothed by a cold doctrine. There is so much evil in the world that men have even doubted the existence of One Supreme Jehovah, and have supposed good to be from One Source, and evil from another. Jehovah challenges supremacy, and declares Himself the Author of both good and evil. "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." (Isaiah xlv. 7.) Good and evil are both from the hand of God. It may be difficult for us to reconcile the apparent discrepancies of God's Providence; yet He reigneth, and none other; and although "clouds and darkness are round about Him," yet "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne."

The *universality* of God's reign, and the fact that His government is *moral*, might profitably engage our attention; but we shall confine ourselves to the two points of the verse,—the *mysteriousness* and *equity* of the Divine government.

We are perplexed with facts which seem not easily to be reconciled with the goodness and equity of God.

I. For example, THE EXISTENCE OF MORAL EVIL.

We see sin in such revolting and painful forms around us, and feel so much of its sad effects within us,—that we are apt to inquire, why an almighty and holy Being should permit it—at least to such a dire extent? Why not stop the torrent? Why not cure the disease? Why have I such a sinful nature? Why is sin so deep? so all-pervading? so inveterate?

1. Sin is not *infused* into our nature. God is not its author. "He cannot be tempted with evil, neither (thus) tempteth He any man."

2. Nor is sin *a necessary evil* of our constitution; being formed with such appetencies and passions, it is not unavoidable that we should be sinful. Christ had all the parts and powers, the natural appetites and desires, of human nature, and was without sin. Adam was a perfect *man*, when formed by God, yet "very good," and without sin.

3. Our sinfulness is *derived* from Adam our first father, and universal progenitor. We have a natural connection with him, and the whole race is what he was after his fall. As all animals, and seeds, and plants, are of the

same nature with the first of their kind; so we resemble our first parent, our natural root; it pleasing God to create the first pair, and to determine that all future human beings should be derived from them. But Adam sustained towards his posterity another important relationship: he was the Federal Head of the race—their Covenant Head; and his unfaithfulness affected all his posterity. He forfeited blessings which they could not recover; and God was not bound to restore to the children what had been forfeited by the parent. His sin broke the covenant, and forfeited its blessings of spiritual life,—of health, and peace. Our *depravity* arises from a *deprivity;* we are born unholy, unrighteous, ungodly; and are by nature children of wrath.

4. Nor is it unjust in God to withhold from men blessings which He bestowed on our first father. Their continuance was conditional; the convenant included known promises and penalties; and the hereditary principle is acknowledged among men without any suspicion of its being unjust; *e.g.*, a peer of the realm attainted of high treason; and children inheriting good and evil from their parents, irrespective of their own character.

5. But the question recurs, How came Adam to sin? If he were holy, and had the power to continue holy, how came he to sin?

The circumstances of his temptation and fall are recorded in the only history that opens back to that period. It was by consequence of his liberty as a moral agent that he fell. If he were responsible, he must be free; and if free, it must be possible that he should

transgress. He was not a stock, or a stone; he was not a machine to move only as moved; but an intelligent, moral being, made in the image of God, and able to keep or transgress the law. He listened to the tempter, sinned, died in consequence, and forfeited, for himself and his posterity, all the blessings God had promised to his obedience. Thus sin was produced and entailed upon men.

6. But perhaps the question may be pushed still farther; it may be asked, How came holy angels to sin? The circumstances of their defection and fall are not revealed; but they appear to have been individually created, and to have stood each for himself, and not in a covenant Head. They also were created holy, for a Holy Being could only create them good. But because moral agents, they had a *trial*, although we know not, in their case, in what that trial consisted. They were free to stand, able to have resisted temptation from within, probably from the survey of their own marvellous nature, their glorious powers, which might become an incentive to pride and self-sufficiency: others stood, and are confirmed in their high and holy state.

But it is plain that sin has entered into the world by God's having created beings of so glorious a nature that they were free, though dependent upon God; their powers they could use according to His will, or against it; their liberty they abused, and in sinning, incurred the penalty of sin,—death; death temporal, spiritual, and eternal.

7. Now, when we look abroad on the vast amount of moral evil in the universe;—evil angels, so numerous,

malignant, busy, cunning, powerful, successful;—sin and its wretched consequences deluging our world for all these centuries,—filling it with misery and death,—we may well inquire, How can these things be consistent with righteousness and judgment? Truly *clouds and darkness are round about Him!*

8. But yet there is equity in the dispensations of God. Evil is only permitted, not decreed. It is not the will or plan of God; an enemy hath done this. It is, moreover, made the occasion of the display of the wisdom and love, as well as of the justice and righteousness of His government. The fall makes way for the glories of redemption. The religion of innocence is gone, but the religion of salvation comes in its stead. It is better for us that we do not stand on individual fidelity to a covenant of works, which will not admit of one transgression; and that instead, we have a covenant of grace, which secures pardon of multiplied and aggravated sins. No man is lost through Adam's sin, but only for his own transgression of the law under which he knows he is placed, whether a sin against the heathen law written upon the heart, or the rejection of gospel salvation made known by revelation. Instead of our being in a worse position in consequence of Adam's sin, prevenient grace, an infinite atonement, free justification by faith alone, and the renewing and saving operations of the Holy Spirit, place us in a better position; and where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound. Multitudes perish, rejecting mercy. Moral evil is widely diffused, and the punishment of many is augmented; but the final

number of the saved, especially if the Millennium period should be, according to some, a thousand years of prophetic days, each day being a year,—the final number of the saved will be vast indeed.

And however mysterious this dispensation of God may appear, we must ever remember that God is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works. He will be clear when He is judged. We see now only part of His ways; how small a portion is understood! The question does not affect our salvation or welfare, or there would not be such clouds about it: God would have more clearly shown us why He permitted moral evil to be so extensive and so dire, had it been necessary. Our business is, to escape or conquer the evil; and for this end all is clear and adequate in the provisions of revelation and of mercy.

II. A second great difficulty in the Divine administration, is the extent of PHYSICAL EVIL we find in the world.

1. And by this term we mean all the suffering of mind and body which we endure, whether directly and manifestly from the hand of God, or from the hand of man, or as the natural consequence of our own doings or neglects. We may class them under two heads,—*pain*, in its various kinds and degrees; and *death*, the last great evil of this dispensation.

2. Now, we find pain in ten thousand forms,—in ourselves,—in those around us. It is vain to attempt to enumerate their sources, or to describe their frightful aspects. We may rather ask, What is there that may not

become an occasion of pain? And the question arises in our gloomy moments, Why has God occasioned us so much suffering? Is it wise? is it gracious? is it just?

3. Perhaps it would be well to inquire whether it be not necessarily incident to the capability of pleasure that there should be a capability of pain? The nerve which thrills with delight, may *therefore* be agonized with pain. The sense of hearing—delicious music—implies the pain of grating discord. The benevolent affections—which fill with ecstasy and joy—render us sensitive to the anguish of ingratitude and of disappointed hope.

4. But we are probably greatly mistaken in the amount of our sufferings, as compared with that of our enjoyments.

Our sufferings make a deeper impression than our pleasures; and they are brought more prominently forward. We know that we may soon be in the circumstances of those with whom we sympathize; and we know that great successes are the lot of few.

History, general and local, past and present, records chiefly great calamities that strike and startle,—wars, famines etc.; while the quiet, unobtrusive pleasures of life make no figure—have no record.

Our greatest mercies are our common mercies; but because they are common they are not duly estimated, and are even overlooked. We are apt to call those only blessings which are uncommon: and nightly rest, and daily bread; the use of our limbs, and bodily and mental faculties; the continuance of friendships, and comforts, and ordinary prosperity,—these are the staple of life. God daily loadeth us with benefits, which raise no

gratitude, and awaken no song. We overlook our good, and exaggerate our evil.

It is admitted there is evil in life—much evil; but it might have been much greater. Every movement might have occasioned pain. All things might have been ill-suited. We might have been haunted with constant fear.

And evil is balanced with good. Weather is sometimes foul, but oftener fair.

There is no contrivance for our misery. Otherwise every necessary act would have given pain. Eating would have been, not a gratification, but a distress.

That pain is not the *design* is evident, because it is not the *effect* of arrangement: no part of the body is *made* for pain. You cannot say, Here are glands made for secreting gout; there, is a contrivance for rheumatism; there again, an arrangement for nervous agony. If that had been the design, God could surely have reached it; but pain is not the rule, but the exception; not intended, but incidental. Nature has no set of engines (like those of the Inquisition) for torture. Besides, so large a proportion of pain is self-procured—by thoughtlessness—improvidence—idleness—want of self-denial—sin: these bring poverty, disease, misery.

Do we still stumble at the amount of physical evil, and wonder why God should thus make life so largely a scene of misery? Let us take two or three further considerations.

1. All these evils are the fruits of sin. Physical evil follows moral evil. A holy, gracious, and just Being,

would not inflict suffering were it undeserved. And if we cannot see that our personal share of suffering is equitable, we can remember that we belong to a *race* who have sinned; that we are all under one dispensation; that all is mingled for the present; that no man has the share of evil that his personal guilt merits; and that physical evil is God's impressive protest against sin, and His lesson to sinners, that the way of *transgressors* is hard. If we had any just notion of the evil of sin, we should think little of the weight of suffering.

2. All the evils of life are wonderfully lightened by providential arrangement. Three methods may be indicated.

(1.) *Habit*, which mitigates suffering. Every one knows that long-continued experience of pain of body greatly benumbs the sense of pain: the second stroke does not fall so severely as the first, etc. Even in pain, use is second nature. So with confinement, and monotonous situations and employments. There is a pliability in both body and mind, in adapting themselves to circumstances; and thus habit mitigates suffering. The poor, the hardy, the sickly, how different from the man of silk and down!

It may be said that it implies much suffering, to be alleviated by the *habit* of suffering. But ordinary observation teaches us that we soon become habituated even to want, confinement, pain of body, and mental distress.

(2.) *Hope* is a wonderful alleviation. A few faint—yield to moodiness and despondency; but the mass cultivate hope. It "springs eternal." And all know what it is

to look at the brighter side of things. Two men, one hopeful, sanguine, ardent,—the other, gloomy and despondingunder the same stroke. Hope is a sort of latent trust in God. The prisoner—may one day be free; the sufferer—may have ease, and brighter days, health and enjoyment.

God has endowed us with this principle—to mitigate our physical evil.

(3.) *Sympathy*, which alleviates evil. It is true, it comes from another; but from one source or other, it is almost always available. We are formed thus to help each other, and to be thus helped. Some have even thought it "almost worth while to suffer, in order to be so cared for and helped." Pain has cemented a lasting friendship; loss of all things has gained a firm friend. Sympathy is the sweetener of our cup,—the arm on which we may lean,—the cement of friendship, the gold of life.

3. All the evils of life are disciplinary, and are capable of becoming the means of our highest good.

We speak not now of the power of evil to augment the sense of good. Ease is heightened by pain, and rest by labour; prosperity is brighter after the dark night of adversity, and health is a richer blessing when we are raised up from a wasting sickness. But there is a higher good. We are warned, and restrained, and instructed; we are aroused; our hearts are made soft; and we are led to prayer, by the discipline of suffering. Life is chequered that we may study its uses; pain leads us to seek help; adversity makes us consider; bereavements

remind us of our own dissolution; and under a dispensation of mercy all is remedial and capable of the highest uses and the highest good.

Once more,—we refer to *death*, and to death as it ordinarily appears to us and meets us. This is the consummation of physical evil. Seldom is life so bitter that it is no longer desired. But death will come. Whatever is uncertain, death is sure. But the question arises, Why is life so short? It is full of pain and vanity; why so brief? Or if there are pleasures and beauties, why are we snatched away just as we are beginning to see and enjoy? "Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast Thou made all men in vain?"

"It is the glory of God to conceal a thing." All men naturally and earnestly strive to pry into futurity. All kinds of auguries have been consulted to pierce the clouds that hang upon futurity. The Canaanites practised these arts, and the Hebrews were warned against them. But the future is a hidden world. Were it revealed, that would not add to human virtue—or to human happiness. How could we sustain our trials, if we saw their number and severity? But as to the time of death,—how could the result but be sad? A criminal under any period of imprisonment still has hope; but if he knew certainly the time of his execution could only number his days in misery. Those who know the time of their death are overwhelmed: Saul, when informed by Samuel of his falling in the next battle, fell prostrate and was sore afraid. Sapphira—at the sound of the "feet of them who had buried her

husband"—gave up the ghost. Such knowledge would deprive us of all interest in the concerns of life; all power for temporal duty; it would freeze the current of our affections, and cover us with gloom and terror.

But we may not stop here, at the dark aspect of the king of terrors and the last sad spot on the shadowy borders of both worlds. Revelation casts a clear light where reason "pales her ineffectual fires." The curtain is lifted; the brightness of another world gilds the darkness of the tomb; the dust deposited is numbered; thy dead men shall arise, and sing from the dust. A voice is heard from the throne of an Almighty Redeemer and Ruler, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction!" There is a compensating power in the Gospel against all the terrors of the sentence of the law. He who died for us, despoiled death of his power; He took the poison from his dart, broke his sceptre, and seizing his crown, made His people victors. He has sanctified the grave for the rest of His saints. His promise embalms their bodies, and they are preserved, and shall be resuscitated unto eternal life. In Himself furnishing a glorious Model of physical immortality, a pledge of the resurrection of the saints, and an illustration of the revelations made through His apostle,—HE has taught us another view of death, and has put into our mouths the song of truth as well as of faith,—'O death thou hast no victory! O grave, thou hast no sting! Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

III. We turn now to another subject which has often perplexed good men,—THE MANNER IN WHICH GOD DISPENSES PROVIDENTIAL GOOD AND EVIL TO THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED.

"Why am I thus?" and "Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?" are questions of unbelief and despondency, often revolved however by good, but tried men. David, with all his strength of mind, his large observation and experience, and his general trust in God, was thus perplexed.

Let us see how far the facts are correctly viewed, which occasion this inward debate and trouble.

1. It is plain that the wicked do not prosper *because* of their wickedness. There is no Divine plan to show them favour. All the leading dispensations of Providence are in favour of virtue, and against vice.

[Here the M.S. ends.]

SERMON II.—DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

AN OUTLINE.

"Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living."—Job xxxiii. 29, 30.

I WISH to draw your patient attention to the subject of *Divine Providence*, and especially to its *moral purposes*.

By Divine Providence we mean "God's most wise and gracious preservation and government of all His creatures;" especially as regards the most minute circumstances of human life—directly bestowing every good, permitting evil, and constantly overruling natural evils for moral good, without interfering with the moral liberty of agents.

He who believes in *God*, must, logically, believe in *Providence*. Our first knowledge of God is as *Creator*. But the same power is needed to sustain, and guide, and govern all things. Motion is no attribute of matter—God is the great Mover. All second causes centre in the first and only independent Cause. We find God necessary in all things. He is the only Solution of nature, the only Key of universal mystery, the only Centre of all things, the only Source of all good.

But we are chiefly concerned with Providence about ourselves. What has Providence to do with *me?* Are not individual affairs too insignificant? Two answers—

1. So many events of our lives are so obviously unfortuitous, so obviously unusual, adapted, designed, that we must exclude chance, and admit of a Contriver—of government and ordination—of Providence.

2. The Scriptures are so full of declarations—of God's wise, holy, and gracious government of all things—great and small—that no believer in revelation can doubt a particular Providence. History of God's people—promises of defence, supplies, and temporal good—exhortations to trust in God—seek God—pray—with assurances of being heard,—and instances of answers to prayer,—that none can well doubt of a particular Providence.

A third step leads us at once to our subject—that *God designs moral lessons and moral good by His Providence.* He must, as He is a wise and good Governor—a Father. The true view is a *paternal* government.

This was Elihu's declaration to Job: "Lo, all these things——" Threefold agency revealed:—1. Secret communications from God by dreams. 2. Great personal affliction. 3. Messengers of mercy to expostulate with men.

These sufficiently indicate *methods* of Providence, and *ends* proposed.

Let us, therefore, seek illustrations of our proposition —THAT IN THE CONDUCT OF PROVIDENCE GOD SEEKS THE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL WELFARE OF MANKIND.

I. Our first illustration shall be taken from THE ORIGINAL CURSE PRONOUNCED UPON MAN.

No one can suppose that the condition of the world is

as God originally designed it. Before the fall, a simple bestowment of good. Then no curse—elements not armed against man—body not stricken with mortality—mind not ignorant and wayward—soul not vicious and rebellious. Moral evil brought natural evil.

But before the full curse was pronounced—Redeemer indicated. Hope, light, and joy and strength—preceded. The serpent first in guilt—first in punishment. Then woman: Her curse heavy, but not hopeless; and was, moreover, remedial. *Sorrow — pain — subordination* soften the heart—giving to maternal affection deeper sympathy; peril induces watchfulness—love is tempered and every affection made more religious.

To *man*—ground cursed with sterility—needing labour—not mere employment and taste. No longer eats fruits of paradise but the herb of the field. Principal point we notice is that of *painful labour*. Now this is the law of existence—of society—none exempted by God. Possible immunity from toil is accidental and rare. Labour of hands and of head, both exhausting.

But all *mitigated*, and connected with *moral ends*—all remedial. Labour strengthens *constitution*—wards off diseases—promotes the flow of spirits—gives zest to life. *Sleep* of labouring man sweet—profound—refreshing. Devotees of fashion — the luxurious and idle — long for it. Labour invigorates *intellect*—shutting out day-dreams—exercising the faculties—giving an end and purpose to action—elevating aims.

Labour promotes *social goodness*—curbing vice.

Here, then, high moral ends. A good discipline for

man. The world a grand reformatory school, where labour is part of the discipline.

II. Our second illustration from THE USUAL CONSEQUENCES OF VIRTUE AND VICE,—OF SIN AND HOLINESS.

Whoever observes society—or marks his own life—perceives so frequent and so general corrective effects of conduct, that he cannot doubt there is an Observer, a Governor, a Judge of all his ways. Retribution is not uniform, lest we should imagine all to be ended in this world: not so infrequent that we can suppose no Divine notice or regard. Enough to convince us that "Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth."

Take, for illustration—*sins of flesh*,—eating—drinking—sensuality. Gross sins issue in disease—loss of character, of property, etc. Refined, in general disorder—depressive evils beyond skill or ken of physicians. Intemperance fruitful of all evil—insidious—ruinous.

Sins of spirit,—ambition—pride—vanity—mortification—disappointment—"a fall." Envy, hatred, malice, uncharitableness—self-withering misery. Falsehood, injustice, covetousness—return on one's own pate. Not believed—not trusted—not loved. Negligence, idleness, improvidence—clothed with rags—poverty comes as armed man.

So when men repent, reform, do good,—although effects of sin not at once obliterated or removed,—yet God shows Himself on the side of virtue and goodness. Drunkard and debauched—idle and dissolute—unjust and covetous—deceptive and untruthful—all find recompense in temporal evil. Understood by all. And rule

so ordinary, that all expect it. Warn children of evil habits, and encourage good. Tell sinners of temporal consequences, and encourage by immediate good.

III. A third illustration may be found in THE INHERENT VANITY OF ALL EARTHLY GOOD. We are capable of high enjoyments, they are profusely granted,—yet they do not satisfy us.

I find myself in a world full of surpassing beauty. The glorious arch of heaven in meridian splendour filled with light as from the throne itself—clouds of every form and hue, careering before the wind, casting grotesque and fleeting shadows on mountain side—air filled with music —from gentle zephyrs playing in the foliage—harmony of the feathered race, filling the ear with expression of joy from the whole creation—hoarse murmur of cascade toppling headlong from the cliff: these I can enjoy. Look out upon the vast abyss of waters—now like the glassy mirror—now tossed in angry waves. Its vastness, like the depth of heaven, fills with sublime emotions. The everlasting mountains—swelling uplands—fertile valleys—glassy lake, majestic river, murmuring brook—all give me pleasure—and often when combined, ecstatic joy. I turn from these to pleasures of the mind in philosophy, and science, and general knowledge—loftier pleasures. And then, just and laudable worldly pursuits; pleasures of heart, in friendship, in social happiness—in joys of home—and these are purest and most filling pleasures—nay, well-spring of earthly happiness, sum of earthly good.

Now, I ask, How is it that these all do not give me full satisfaction? *Chasm*—unreality—a vain show. Ask the voluptuary—man of fashion—of the world. Ask man of wealth. Ask statesman, or him who has gained the summit of ambition. Ask the man of moderate means—whose claims and desires are the most limited. All say, they only find *pleasure*, not *happiness*—surface-joys, not deep and abiding. Else, why such changes? why are solitude and quiet thought, reflection on the past—so unbearable? Why such *ennui*—sadness—melancholy? Why such dreadful plunges into unknown eternity?

What is all of human life? A day-dream—vanity—smoke. A bubble—with beauteous colours: touch it—it bursts. Promise to the ear—not kept to the heart. Mirage in the desert: you pursue—sicken—faint—die. "Man never *is*—but always *to be* blest." More in prospect than reality. Hope always tells a flattering tale. When men speak truth they acknowledge this. Col. Gardiner, the "happy rake!"—envied dogs. A greater than all these—one who had wealth, knowledge, fame, empire, power—pleasures of buildings, and music, and wine, and women,—all that heart could wish of earthly good—yet when he came to his right mind, wrote the sum of human attainments in one short sentence—written with pen of iron on the fleshly table of his own heart, and engraved on the rock for ever, where was piled up all earthly grandeur: *Vanity of vanities;* all is vanity and *vexation of spirit!*

Why am I thus? Capable of vast pleasures—great in

desire as in capacity—yet no satisfaction: nothing to bear reflection. Why? Because God made me for higher ends—for Himself—for what is infinite—and eternal. I am disappointed in the creature that I may return to God.

Here, then, Providence is moral—and gracious. Its lessons impressed upon the heart are perpetual means of grace.

IV. We find a fourth illustration in THE MORE SPECIAL DISPENSATION OF PROVIDENCE TOWARDS US.

God sometimes comes out of the holy place.

Seasons of *scarcity* press heavily upon poor, but also reach the rich—confuse commerce—and dry up resources of tradesmen—perplex statesmen, and exhaust benevolence. Seasons of *commercial panic*, even when we know the cause—cannot control or even guide. Like the mountain wave striking on a noble bark, she does not founder, but quivers as if from an electric shock. All classes feel the stroke.

Seasons of *pestilence*—or *famine*—when invisible angel of death, with noiseless tread, and viewless sword, walks the land, and decimates population.

Or when more *limited*—and *special*—a firm is bankrupt, those used to affluent circumstances reduced to want—the employed are without work—the honest fearfully tempted, when mother and children are a prey to gaunt famine—and all dark in prospect.

Or when *sickness* enters a family. There is that beauteous flower tended in early life with so much care—which has

escaped earliest dangers, been watched through interesting childhood, and reached the sweet age of prime. Now mother's joy and father's pride,—all beauty, virtue and grace in their eyes. You looked on—with joys too exquisite to last. Thought her sickly,—but put the thought from you—tried to believe it impossible—until another day—found it too true—and then, alternations of hope and fear—*saw* the flower bend on its stalk, its glories fading—till it fell among the leaves and weeds—and withered. No lesson in all this?

Dreams (see v. 14—18). Are there no such now? Then God gets our private ear. Humbling—terrible truths. Thus with John Bunyan. None since? *John Bunyan, Col. Gardiner*—(Assignation for twelve. At eleven dream or vision. Saw Saviour—pierced ——).

Perhaps you mock at dreams. When they teach a religious lesson—depend upon it, not a mere fancy, but a lesson from God, a means of grace.

Then *personal affliction* (v. 19—21). What a picture! Have you never seen it?—never felt it? Natural tendency is to soften heart. "God maketh my heart soft—the Almighty troubleth me." Seen stout man tremble—weep—careless become thoughtful, the prodigal sue for reconciliation. God can so shake you over the grave's mouth—that you shall howl in bed—and even pray.

And then comes in—*a gracious messenger.* God sends an interpreter—a tract—a casual remark—an earnest conversation—a Christian friend—all welcome now. Death a serious thing. The despised saint—whom you

avoided—crossed the street to escape because he would talk about most urgent matters—*welcome* now. His footsteps heavy, and language uncouth—but he can tell how you may be saved. Sees sin—need of mercy—directed to Him Who has paid the *ransom.* Prayer is heard—your soul saved—death and multitude of sins hidden (v. 23—28).

These are all special chastisements of our Heavenly Father—needed discipline wisely and graciously inflicted.

V. Finally, let us look at THE CHARACTER STAMPED UPON DEATH.

Can easily imagine it might have been a delightful thing to die. Premonitions pleasant and joyous—and ecstasy increased as soul drew near to bare existence—frame attenuated—knot gently untied—and moment of release full of physical pleasure and intellectual delights.

Alas! not so. Approach to gloomy valley is gloomy too. Death is a grim monster—sits at the mouth of the dark underground passage that leads to brightness and joy—and fierce diseases wait around.—Dark, dismal, full of fears and sorrows, is the path from mortality to immortality.—Dreadful the final conflict.

Why should it be thus? Why? but to read a lesson from the last temporal curse of sin. Language is "Prepare to meet thy God." Every fear, sorrow, conflict, pain,—is a moral lesson.

Derive important lessons.

1. Remember that *all providences are paternal, moral,*

remedial. Your Father is ever with you. His eye is upon you. His ear is open to your cry. You live in His heart. He is waiting to do you good. All your disappointments, losses, bereavements, afflictions, sorrows—all are for your discipline; to awaken reflection, lead to prayer, and bring you home to God. O concur—yield—repent, pray, return.

2. *Whole system of Providence is founded upon the scheme of redemption.* Without this, all Providence would simply be punishment—severity, untempered by goodness. But promise of Redeemer before infliction of curse. New dispensation is in hands of Christ—He mitigates the stroke of justice by satisfying law—opens way for mercy.

Go therefore to Christ—confess your sins—seek mercy, trust in His blood. Remember for your comfort in trouble, that all is in the hands of Him, Who wore our flesh, trod our earth, carried our sorrows, died for our sins, and is now at right hand of God—yet touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

SERMON III.—THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

"So also is the resurrection of the dead."—1 Corinthians xv. 42.

THIS extraordinary chapter is not a proof of the doctrine of a future resurrection, as is commonly supposed, but a series of illustrations of that sublime and comfortable truth of Revelation. Its proof rests upon the resurrection of Christ. His resurrection and ours being linked together, as the first fruits and the harvest. If a resurrection be simply an impossibility, "then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." (Read 1 Cor. xv. 12—22.)

The fact of Christ's resurrection is then the proof that all men shall be raised from their graves; of a literal resurrection of the body that is laid in the grave,—is sown in corruption, and is raised in incorruption.

The doctrine is full of comfort to the righteous, and of terrible import to the wicked. The one class are apt to doubt it, and the fears of the other make them desire to disbelieve it. As a sure and certain event, which we are all to experience, it will be an appropriate improvement of the present solemnity if we study its proofs and illustrations.

We will endeavour to consider, with profound submission to the truths and limits of revelation,

I. THE CERTAINTY OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY; and

II. THE DECLARATIONS OF SCRIPTURE IN REFERENCE TO THE QUALITIES OF THE FUTURE BODIES OF THE SAINTS.

I. THE CERTAINTY OF A FUTURE RESURRECTION OF ALL MANKIND.

And, as the term *resurrection* necessarily implies, the same body shall be raised. It is impossible to say in what the identity of the human body consists; and therefore, say some, it is not the same body that will be raised, but a similar body. But it is evident that while appearing to admit the doctrine of a future resurrection, this objection entirely overthrows it; for unless it were the same body, it could be no *resurrection*, and the term is an absurdity. That only can be raised which is laid down. Unless it be *this* vile body, changed we grant, it must be a new body, never before inhabited by a human spirit; and this is no resurrection, but a new creation. And whatever difficulties encompass the subject, the doctrine is plain;—it is an express revelation of God that our present bodies shall be raised from the grave at the last day. How express the language of Job xix. 26, 27: "Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." "*This* corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." "He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken our mortal bodies." (Rom. viii. 11.) "The hour is coming,

in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth." (John v. 28, 29.) "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell (the grave) delivered up the dead which were in them." (Rev. xx. 13.) "I will raise it up again at the last day." What language can be more express? They who are in their graves, they who are engulfed in the sea,—shall come forth. He who sleeps in death shall awake by a resurrection.

The resurrection of Christ is the illustration as well as proof of a resurrection. But every evidence was furnished that the same body which was crucified was raised, and appeared unto the disciples. "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side:" and thus He gave sensible proof that it was that very body which alone was pierced on the cross.

"Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" It is a question only of Divine power. But it implies no contradiction; and is therefore possible. It is the declared purpose of God, and therefore is sure. That there are what appear to us as physical difficulties is admitted; but there are no greater difficulties in a resurrection than in creation. The alleged difficulties arise from the dispersion of our bodies in various ways at death. And it is true they are scattered wide, by winds and storms, and sometimes devoured by fire, which is not a less difficulty than the fact that some human beings have become food for their own species. But was not this all foreknown by Him who has declared

His purpose? Is there not now, in every man, a perpetual change of particles, so that a man, in *that respect*, is not what he was ten years ago? Identity does not consist in sameness of particles; or he would not be the real criminal who is dealt with for a crime committed ten years ago. He who has suffered amputation of his limbs on the battle-field, and returns home to his friends, would not be the son who left his father's roof twelve months before. Amidst all changes, from youth to age, and from health to sickness, and from sickness to health, we *are* the same persons; and we know it. Adam, when sickening under the disease which was to bring him down to the chambers of the grave at the age of nine hundred and thirty years, after all the wear and tear of life and changes of sickness, knew that he was the same man who awoke to the light of his Creator's smile, and all the brightness of paradise. And Lazarus, after he had been wrapped in the cere-cloth four days, and his body had slept so long in the grave that it was putrefied, when his happy spirit was recalled from the beatitudes of another existence, again to inhabit a body restored to all its former powers, and again to mingle in the world of men, knew that it was a resurrection of the same body. "Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom He had raised from the dead." And those saints, who partook of the first displays of the power of Christ's resurrection, whose "graves were opened," and whose "bodies which slept arose, and came out of the graves, and

went into the holy city, and appeared unto many,"—they were their former selves restored,—and appeared unto many to certify the doctrine of Christ's resurrection, and its cognate truth, of the resurrection of men. Had they not been physically the same men, there had been no evidence of the fact. They knew that they were the same men, and others were convinced of this also.

That it is inexplicable how the same body, after the lapse of thousands of years, should be raised again, does not really constitute an objection; because we constantly admit facts which no man can, or ever will be able to explain. We are surrounded by them, we are full of them. All our knowledge is but a slight invasion of the bounds of universal mystery: when we have reached one point, all is mystery again. It is a question of Almighty power; and we are surrounded by as great expressions of that power every day, only they are familiar to us, and because of their commonness, they fail to strike us. The facts of our own existence are as marvellous as the doctrine of our resurrection. The commencement of our being, the changes of our birth, the progress of body and mind, recovery from sickness,—nay, that we breathe and live, is as much a display of omnipotence, as much a mystery, as the resurrection of them that sleep in their graves.

Indeed every part of creation gives reply to the scepticism which would demur to this doctrine. The dry, husky seed is cast into the earth; it is moistened and warmed, and the germ puts forth its first symptoms of life; the plant is evolved; the flower blossoms; the

insect sips its nectar and the air is filled with its perfume. Is not this a resurrection? The crawling caterpillar gorges itself to death, and is encased in its wonderful sarcophagus. There it lies in torpor, until the genial warmth of spring utters a voice which brings forth, out of that same grave into which the worm retired at death, a beautiful butterfly, with every colour of the rainbow tinting its feathery wings, and it at once enters a new element and a new life; and in the plenitude of enjoyment and activity and insect vigour, it dances in the sunlight of its short day, disporting itself on every flower. Is not this a resurrection? And why

> "May not a creating God,
> Who built this house of clay,
> Re-inspire the breathless clod
> In His appointed day?
> From the dust He form'd us man,
> And shall we circumscribe His power?
> Doubtless the Almighty can
> Our moulder'd dust restore."

The question of identity is involved in great obscurity. What is the principle of identity in bodies constantly undergoing such great changes as ours? It seems to resolve itself into this: we are conscious that we are the same, whatever changes we undergo. I know that I am the same person, body and soul, that I was an hour, a year, twenty years ago, notwithstanding it should be proved that none of the same particles compose my body now, which formed it twenty years ago. I am that same being, capable of life and action, and perpetuating

my individual consciousness through all these successive changes. I feel that I am the same being who, with this right hand, performed an action twenty years ago, and this is that hand.

If then, a greater change than even this entire renovation of the whole person shall be effected at once by the mighty power of Him Who is able to "subdue all things unto Himself,"—shall we therefore deny that in the resurrection, if it were necessary that the very same particles that once formed my body should be re-constructed into a human form, it cannot be impossible to God? for it does not imply a contradiction: it is only a difficulty to our ignorance. But this is not necessary to a resurrection; for I am truly the same being, however the particles of my body may be changed. But if in the resurrection, when the portions of our nature severed at death are re-united, we are conscious that we are the same beings, although our bodies are greatly changed,—then is it truly declared to be a proper resurrection; *and this great event shall be.*

Let us consider,

II. THE REVELATIONS OF SCRIPTURE IN REFERENCE TO THE FUTURE BODIES OF THE SAINTS.

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be." The nature of the subject forbids that we should fully comprehend it; yet undoubtedly, revelation might have been more full and explicit. We must, in our inquiries, remember two things:—1. It was no purpose of revelation to instruct us in the *mode* of things,—on abstruse ques-

tions, for example, concerning the nature of man, the qualities of spirit, the relations of matter to mind, or the rationale of our future existence. Its great and all-important object is to teach us salvation and duty. Every necessary truth is taught with wonderful plainness, and all is intended to serve the highest moral ends, and is adapted to the plain understandings of the masses of mankind.

But, 2. Revelation does, incidentally and by implication, teach much more on these difficult and secondary subjects, than appears at first sight; and so long as we are careful to submit our understanding to God's declarations, and to hold such discoveries subordinate to our faith, we may profitably search for hid treasure, and delight ourselves in truths which we do not hold needful to salvation. The depths of Scripture conceal great treasures of knowledge, and they cannot be exhausted; but if we ransack its deep caverns for gems of truth which must be sought in great deeps, we must not forget that we must live by the light and air of the upper world; and we must not lose our life in seeking treasure, while we neglect the ordinary means of salvation.

The doctrine of a resurrection being thus established, as possible and certain, the inquiry is, "With what body shall they come?"

One thing is affirmed, which commends itself to every man's understanding,—that these bodies will not suit the heavenly state. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. . . . We shall all be changed." There will be

multitudes living when Christ comes the second time to the eternal salvation of His people; and these must undergo a change equivalent to that which the bodies of the saints shall experience in the resurrection. The law is universal, that every body is suited to the state which it is to occupy; and when therefore a body changes its state, itself must undergo a corresponding change. This is seen in the butterfly emerging from the caterpillar, and in other transmutations; the same body is changed, modified in many important respects. And in the case of the myriads who die it is to be effected in the resurrection.

The Scriptures instruct us that the raised body of Christ is the type and model of the future bodies of the saints. "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." That resurrection does not necessarily imply any transmutation—any change from the natural body, is evident from the instances recorded in Scripture of men who died, and were raised, and lived again. That the identical body of Christ that was crucified, was raised, there is abundant proof. But that body was changed, and exhibited new and mysterious attributes. He was manifest to His disciples, by many infallible proofs. They saw Him, they heard Him, they handled Him, they ate with Him, they conversed with Him; in short, for forty days they had at times such sensible proofs of His real resurrection, that they were prepared to testify the fact in the face of the most cruel death. "Handle Me," said our Lord,—to assure them that it was not a phantasm that deluded

them,—not a spiritual, incorporeal being,—"for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." But it would seem that He was able to go in and out of their presence without their knowing how. When the doors were secured for fear of the Jews, He entered in among them. After a journey, and long converse, and a repast, "He vanished out of their sight." He had no longer a home, nor ordinary subsistence. He needed not food, yet it would appear that on two occasions at least, He dined with them. He was the same Jesus, but how changed! In fact, it seems that what had before been natural was now miraculous, or extraordinary; and that which before was extraordinary or miraculous had become the rule.

But keeping our eye upon the brief history given of our Lord, of His sojourn upon earth after His resurrection, we may turn our most earnest attention to the statements of St. Paul, in reference to the future bodies of the saints.

1. Their bodies will be *incorruptible and immortal.* "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption." "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." This is a mighty change. The most obvious mark upon our present bodies, is the stain and curse of sin in our corruptibility,—a constant and universal tendency to decay. The very earliest portion of our history is in proof. The number who die in early infancy is an affecting comment on the curse pronounced on our bodies. The early bud is blasted; the fairest flower has a worm at its root; the most vigorous shoots

are soon cut off; the stately tree is laid low by the relentless axe; and the mightiest cedar of the forest has to yield to the stern destroyer, and to bow its head. The whole of life is one continued struggle against the pains and diseases of mortality. The symptoms of a declining age soon come upon us. The limbs gradually lose their elasticity, and the faculties their vigour; the furrows of age and care and sorrow deepen, strength declines, pains multiply, languor and feebleness overspread the frame, the almond-tree flourishes, the daughters of music are brought low, and death completes at a stroke the present effect of the curse; and we say, "Give me a place where I may bury my dead out of my sight." Mortality and corruption imprint themselves on our dust as the law of this state of being.

But the future state shall exhibit a striking contrast to this condition. "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." The two are not the same. A corruptible body might be made immortal; and an incorruptible body might be annihilated. But our bodies shall be both incorruptible and immortal. They shall know no disease, nor pain, nor weakness, nor hunger, nor thirst. These all are bounded by the tomb. This is to be "the redemption of our body;" that as our souls are redeemed and saved from moral evil by the grace of Christ, so our bodies also shall be redeemed "from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." "He shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you."

And this resurrection shall not be to another sleep. "Neither shall they die any more." They shall be *equal unto the angels.* These appear to flourish in immortal youth. On them duration imprints no marks of age. The children of the first resurrection shall live and reign for ever and ever.

2. *It is raised in glory,* in contrast with its present dishonour. It is now the body of our humiliation, a humiliation self-procured. It is marked by dishonour, as a ruined temple, great even in ruins;—but it shall be restored. It was a perfect work of God,—fit to be His visible image and representative on earth, and the glory of all His works. We have reason to believe that the human nature of Christ was like the perfect humanity in paradise; but the grace which doth much more abound, provides a more glorious body for the saints. What that glory is with which the bodies of the saints shall be invested, we cannot properly conceive; yet there are intimations which we may study. The idea of glory in the Scriptures is that of light and brightness. It is especially by light and fire that the God of glory has always manifested Himself; and its shining forth has been reflected upon His people. Moses' converse with God produced this effect upon his countenance, insomuch that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look upon him, and he had to moderate the brightness with a veil. Stephen, when he offered his prayer of martyrdom to the King of Martyrs, exhibited a marvellous brightness, an adumbration of his future glory as the proto-martyr. "And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on

him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." Our bodies are to be of like form with Christ's glorious body, not the perfect human nature which He wore previous to His crucifixion, but His glorified body. Accordingly the Apostle speaks of the glory which shall be revealed in, or into us. And Christ Himself gave to the three disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, a specimen of what the human body is capable of receiving, or of being invested with. He "was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His *raiment* was white as the light." What must have been the splendour of His body, when it produced such effects upon His very raiment? St. Paul saw Him as he journeyed to Damascus; "a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun," shone from the presence of Christ. St. John gives a wonderful description of the person of Him with whom He had once held such familiar intercourse as the humbled Son of Man. "His head and His hairs were white like wool;" etc. (Rev. i. 13—16.) What must have been the transcendent glory of that Presence which should make even St. John fall at His feet as dead? And yet it is not presumption to say that we who wear such a dishonourable badge, the token of our servility, the deep stain of our apostasy,—are one day to wear the garments of praise,—to be assimilated to Christ our Redeemer, Pattern, Pledge! It is the working of that mighty power by which He is able to "subdue all things unto Himself," that we shall need for such a transformation. But it is assured unto us; and His Omnipotence is now an attribute which

we can claim for our recovery from the dishonour of death.

> "Safe in Thine arms I lay me down,
> Thine everlasting arms of love."

3. *It is raised in power*, after being sown in weakness. There can be no doubt that sin greatly weakened the body, and rendered it less fit to be the instrument of the soul in its highest pursuits. Physically it is weak, and the instances of great power which have appeared in individuals, only illustrate the remark. It is after all but a small amount of labour, fatiguing anxiety, pain, disease, sorrow, that the human body can endure. And it constantly needs rest and sleep, to recruit its energy, and food to repair its waste. It is in a state of weakness.

But it is to be raised in power, every way equal to the demands of the soul, and the higher services of the heavenly state. There we can "serve God day and night in His temple," without cessation, and without rest. Then there shall be no need of food or sleep, and yet there shall be no languor, no decay. Here our means of discerning bodies moving very swiftly, or that are very small, or vast, or distant, are very limited; and so are our powers of locomotion. We are conscious of powers which we cannot put forth because of the weakness of our body. Our movements are sadly restricted, our vision, and all our senses, strangely imperfect. There we shall be clothed with power. Like angels, we shall move swiftly, probably with greater swiftness than lightning,—with the speed of thought.

We may then be able to transport ourselves at will, in spite of all obstacles; and to put forth upon matter a power which comparatively annihilates space; that as matter now is in a sense and degree obedient to mind, in that world they who are made equal to the angels shall excel in strength; and like Him Whose body had such wonderful power after His resurrection,—the body of the saints shall be equal in power and activity to the energy of the soul.

Lastly, *the bodies of the saints shall be spiritual*, in opposition to natural or animal, *not* in opposition to corporeal organizations. The present is an animal body. It is an animal production, having animal sensations, appetites, passions, wants, propensities. It is, however, suited to the present state. The organs necessary to our individual existence, belong to us, are an essential part of our nature in the present state. But in the future state, where we shall be incorruptible, powerful, and immortal, we shall not have animal wants, and therefore shall not need animal bodies. Two features of that state, and of the bodies suited to it, are intimated in Scripture,—the destruction of the organs of digestion, and the absence of marriage; for where none can die, they cannot need food themselves, and the race will not need to be perpetuated. "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats; but God shall destroy both it and them." "They that are counted worthy to obtain that world neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God."

These are indications of the vast change which our

bodies will undergo. How refined may be the matter of which our bodies shall be composed, and how modified in external form, so as to raise them to a higher pitch of beauty, while still preserving their identity, who can tell? The system of flesh and blood will be abolished, with its wants and weaknesses, its dependencies and propensities. It may with a refined substance retain its external form, as that which the Creator first made in His own image after His own likeness; and the idea of which the Holy Spirit reproduced in the body of our Lord. Internal parts may be removed, and yet the external form be retained, and even perfected. We have no reason to think that its form will be altered, and yet its beauty may be inconceivably increased.

Such is the bright and beautiful prospect opened to the Christian; this ruined world restored; and man in more than pristine vigour and purity and bliss, at the head of this lower creation, the empire originally assigned to him.

SERMON IV.—THE HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN.

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."—Revelation vii. 13—17.

Two great objects appear to be designed in this mysterious, but interesting portion of Scripture. On the one hand to furnish a volume of prophecy respecting the state of the Church of Christ to the end of time; and on the other to afford such matter of consolation to the Church as may, through Divine grace, sustain and encourage the suffering people of God to hold fast their confidence of hope unto the end. The predictions, however, are so mysteriously stated and blended, that no two commentators agree entirely in their explications; and probably a full and consistent explanation can only be furnished by the lapse of time, when the fulfilment of the prediction shall explain and confirm it; and all men shall have an abundant proof of the truth of God's word by that argument which shows that prophecy is but anticipated history.

The Diving Being, knowing that writing and printing would give permanency and circulation to this Book, has made the beloved disciple the perpetual prophet of all generations, instead of raising up, as formerly, a succession of men, so that prophecy is *here* always continued and always speaking, a proof of Divine Omniscience, of Divine Inspiration, and of Divine Government.

The second great object is effected in part by the same means, but chiefly by interspersing assurances that the Church and cause of Christ cannot be extinguished; by exhibitions of God's care of His people, and vengeance upon their enemies; and, as in our text, by exhilarating promises and descriptions of the glory and blessedness of the final reward of His people. What so calculated to sustain the faith and patience of the saints, as the promise of such an inheritance! They who are in great tribulation are assured that the issue shall be good; they shall be brought *out* of great tribulation, if faithful, into a world where there is no evil, and where all is ineffable delight.

The text occurs under the opening of the sixth seal. The fifth refers chiefly to the cry of the souls of the martyrs from under the altar for vengeance upon their persecutors, not from a spirit of vindictiveness, but for the manifestation of the Divine perfections. The sixth seal is the pouring out of the vengeance of Almighty God upon the persecutors of His Church. But before that wrath goes forth, the saints of the Most High are to be distinguished and saved by receiving the seal of God upon their foreheads. The Jewish Church is thus

sealed, and then the Gentile: the one represented as twelve thousand of each tribe; and the other as a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kingdoms and peoples and tongues. These, sealed and saved, are the persons to whom our text refers: "these are they which came out of great tribulation," etc.

The text represents the perfect happiness of the saints in glory under four aspects:

I. AS PERFECT FREEDOM FROM ALL SUFFERINGS.

II. AS A CONSTANT HOLY WORSHIP.

III. AS A STATE OF THE HIGHEST SPIRITUAL ENJOYMENT.

IV. AS SECURED TO THE SAINTS BY THE SACRIFICIAL DEATH OF CHRIST.

I. AS PERFECT FREEDOM FROM ALL SUFFERINGS.

1. *All sufferings arising from the body shall be done away.* "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more;" *i.e.*, all sufferings derived from the body shall be abolished.

Hunger and thirst are natural appetites wisely and graciously implanted in our nature to compel us to seek the food which is necessary to repair the wastes of the body, and to preserve it in healthful and vigorous life. Hunger is a monitor to remind us that the machine needs help; and if the warning be neglected, it soon becomes so painful, as to compel us to labour in order to obtain the needful supply. No misery is greater than the excessive gnawings of hunger, and the torture of unrelieved thirst. But although in their natural degree they are not excessively painful, yet in excess they inflict

the most dreadful agonies, and form a fearful part of the curse. They are a necessary evil; needful for the preservation of the individual; needful for the present mode of existence, especially as a stimulus to labour.

But in heaven these sufferings of extreme hunger and thirst are unknown. The bird in its shell subsists after a different manner from the same bird when it afterwards soars aloft, and exercises its various instincts. We ourselves have undergone several changes already; and we have therefore no reason to believe that death will be anything more than another change, which, so far from ending our being, may be only the means of another advance towards the perfection of our nature. As the unborn child can form no conception of the nature or manner of the change which its birth will produce, neither can we know what will be the nature and effect of that change upon us which we call death. All must be experienced to be known. But it is sound philosophy to say, that if man essentially consists of body and soul, of matter and mind, and is to continue in being in a future state, he must in that future state consist of body and soul, or he would not be the same, but another being. And it is also sound philosophy to say that a different *state* will require a body in many respects different.

Now, this is the doctrine of Scripture. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." "We must all be changed." "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." This corporeal system shall undergo a mighty but mysterious change. It shall subsist without

food: a truth full of mystery; but a truth readily consented to and believed where there is faith in the Scriptures, and in the power of God. Why should it be thought a thing incredible, when we reflect on the power of Him who creates? Has He not shown His power over matter, and illustrated that truth, that man does not subsist by bread alone, by the efficiency of ordinary means, but by the word and appointment of God? Did not Moses, and Elijah, and Christ, fast forty days? And does not the suspension of the laws of nature for that period, show a power that could extend itself indefinitely? But these were supernatural events. The bodies of the saints shall be naturally independent of food. This is one point of the Apostle's contrast: "It is sown a natural," or animal "body; it is raised a spiritual body." We know not what a spiritual body strictly means; but we see that it is the opposite of animal; that it shall not need animal support; that it shall know neither hunger nor thirst; that it shall be capable of constant service without weariness; that it shall therefore be raised in power, so that it shall never need relaxation or repose; that it shall never be afflicted, for there shall be no more pain, nor crying; that it shall retain its freshness for ever, safe from diseases and decline, for it shall be raised in incorruption; that it shall know no decay, and there shall be no more death; that all the revolting and humiliating features of human nature shall pass away; and beauty as well as vigour shall mark all the saints; for it is sown in dishonour, and raised in glory.

O how much is implied in the absence of the sorrows and anxieties and cares and labours which now belong to the body! Here to prop up, and maintain tenantable these frail tabernacles, forms a large part of every man's business. How much time is consumed in toil and care and sleep for the sake of the body, which requires it in this state. But it will soon be ended. It is ended with many of our friends,—with all the glorified saints.

2. *All sufferings arising from climate and seasons shall pass away.* "Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." This seems partly to follow from what we have stated. The body will be suited to the state. But how different a world! Here, since as Milton supposes, "the earth was turned askance," the seasons have become less equable and less genial. All fierce extremes are found. Here the sun burns fiercely, so that the most acute sufferings are experienced from the heat; and there the other extreme is endured, and thick-ribbed ice binds the earth as with bars of iron; while in the intermediate region, the sudden changes of temperature are trying to the strongest constitution, and often occasion painful and incurable disorders. Where the Scriptures were first known, the excessive heat was the chief source of sufferings from climate; and hence many of the figurative promises and representations were such as in a tropical climate would be well understood to exhibit the greatest blessings and enjoyments. "The shadow of a great rock in a weary land," is an intimation of refreshment in the Divine favour which we cannot fully appreciate. "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon

by night," is a promise which may well illustrate the blessing of the text. The traveller was often killed or bereft of reason by a stroke of the sun by day; or if he escaped this dreadful visitation, he was still liable, without great caution, to be most painfully affected by the beams of the moon by night. But all the vicissitudes, and sufferings, and dangers of climate, are unknown there.

> "In a milder clime they dwell,
> Regions of eternal day."

3. *All sufferings arising from Divine dispensations are excluded.* "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Here He mitigates the curse in a thousand ways; and O how often He dries up the tears of His people! But the character of the present dispensation is that of discipline. Chastisement is never inflicted but when needful; and then only in proper measure. "Thou shalt consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." But our sins, and errors, and ignorances, and forgetfulness, keep us always in the school. The journey of life is through the valley of Bochim. We commence it weeping, and we continually weep, and many end it in tears. A popular poet has given currency to the profane sentiment, that "man was *made* to mourn." It is a libel on the good God. Man was *not* made to mourn, but to rejoice. It is sin which has made man to mourn. But while the sinner must mourn for ever where is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth,—the saint shall cease to mourn, as

soon as he ceases to live here. *There* there are no painful providences. "Sad Rachel weeps her loss no more." We shall not weep over unconverted children, and alienated friends, and cruel enemies. There shall be no bereavements, no separations. The enemy shall not be permitted to enter. There shall be no chastisement of strong pain, nor any of those exquisite miseries which arise from morbid sensibility. Here life is but a fitful April day: "a little sun, a little rain." No enjoyment is of certain continuance; and none unmixed and pure. Even hope deceives, and often occasions some of our most exquisite sufferings. Like the little cloud which the parched traveller sees arising in the horizon, tinged with the golden light of the morning, and gently spreading over the heavens,—full of colours, full of promise, and full of hope. But alas! the wind quickly drives it away. It has failed to water the earth with showers; and the heart is again sick with deferred hopes.

But *there* are neither dark nor deceitful clouds. There all is blessing. The father receives home his son, who has passed through all the painful discipline of his minority, and with the full assurance of paternal love, and the high welcome to heaven as his everlasting home, "God shall wipe all tears from his eyes."

Brethren, let us not think it a small part of the happiness of heaven, that there shall be no suffering. It evidently implies such a different body, and such a different state, that only those who are partakers of Christ can hope for it. The Spirit that raised up Jesus from the dead, must dwell in us, or He will not quicken

our mortal bodies to this heavenly life. Blessed are they that have "part in the first resurrection," for on them "the second death" shall have "no power."

II. AS A STATE OF CONSTANT HOLY WORSHIP.

"Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple."

There is, throughout this book, a constant allusion to the temple service among the Jews. We have priests, and altars, and sacrifices, and incense, and cherubim, and services. On Mount Zion God was worshipped, incense and a pure offering were presented, and daily was He praised. But that earthly Zion was but the type of the heavenly one,—Jerusalem which is above, and which is the mother of us all. Jerusalem was the holy city, for it was the city of God. The temple was His palace, and the ark was His throne. Here the Lawgiver of Israel gave forth His commands; here He received the homage of His people by the hand of the High Priest; and here He was surrounded by His retinue of servants, and all the emblems of royalty. On the altar was offered the victim of atonement through which He could pardon and bless His people. From between the cherubim He manifested forth His glory. Here He gave the oracle of wisdom, and the answers of peace. The holy of holies was His chamber of audience, the place of intercourse with His ambassadors, the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High.

All this was a type of heaven. Heaven is all one vast temple. It is true St. John says he saw *no temple* in it,

but that is to be understood as intimating, not that there *is no* devotion in heaven, for that which is the highest duty, the noblest peculiarity of man, and the highest happiness of the saints, cannot be excluded from heaven; but St. John means simply that there needed no separate and peculiar place for worship, where it formed the great and constant employment of the saints, and where all was consecrated by the universal and hallowing and intimate presence of the Lord God and the Lamb, who are the temple thereof. Here Jehovah is enthroned; and in the midst of His vast unbounded presence, dwells the glorified humanity of Christ, a Lamb in the midst of the throne.

Now on earth, the service peculiarly required by God was attendance on the sanctuary. The ministers were His priests in their various orders. They dwelt around the temple, ever ready to fulfil their courses. They were His servants. They were before the throne of God, and served Him day and night in His temple. This was a visible theocracy; the present state of the Church is an invisible theocracy; and the future state shall again be a visible theocracy. God shall again dwell in the midst of His people. The tabernacle of God shall be with men. The temple service shall be perfected. The worship shall be pure. Prayer shall be no longer needed, where there is no sense of want. "All is praise, for all is manifestation and light; all is praise, for all is triumph; all is praise, for all is blessedness and love."

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of

God;" a keeping of Sabbath. In this world, we require a separate day for worship; for we have to care for two worlds: the one a visible, sensible world, whose interests and pleasures and sorrows are present, and ever pressing upon us; the other invisible and future, whose interests are of infinite consequence, but which reach us, not by our senses and natural perceptions, but only by faith: the one a world for the body, the other the world of the soul. Our worship at best is imperfect; interrupted by labour, and fatigue, and care; by wanderings of thought and affection; by feebleness of faith, and languor of desire. There it shall be unbroken. "They serve Him *day and night* in His temple;" that is, constantly, for there is no night there. There are no wants to be supplied from the hard-earned results of bodily labour. There are no calls from a work-day world. There is no fatigue, requiring the worshippers to take rest in sleep. There is no depression of spirits, no weariness of attention, no vagrancy of thought, no cessation of praise. Two things especially render the thought of heaven, in this respect, most exhilarating.

1. The whole service is worship: the service is in the *temple.* Devotion forms no exclusive part of the employment of heaven: it will pervade all things; every sentiment, every action, will be "all praise, all ecstasy, all love." There will be no work of the hands in inferior and laborious service,—with a constant struggle to rise above the sordid occupation so as to keep the heart in heaven.

2. There shall be the perfect combination of what can only be very imperfectly known here, the utmost exertion

of mind with the highest fervours of love. Here close and continuous thought abates our fervour: we cannot closely and deeply contemplate without sensibly cooling in our devotions. Were any one in conducting public prayer to dwell only on abstract truths, and to follow a train of spiritual metaphysics, there would be little fervour of devotion. We are so constituted in our present state, that we cannot deeply exercise our reason, and at the same time not interfere with the exercises of the heart: devotion must be simple, or it will not be fervent. But it shall not be so in heaven. We shall be able to feel all the ecstasies of devotion, while intently putting forth mental powers, and engaging in mental pursuits, of which we can now form no conception. We shall then be equal to the angels; and like the living creatures which St. John saw, whose activity and energy is described by their having "six wings;" and their wisdom by their being "full of eyes within;" and their devotion by this, that "they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

My brethren, let us luxuriate in this thought of heaven. It is a state of ceaseless worship. Have you not often cried out, in the holy passion of David, O "when shall I come and appear before God?" "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem!" "I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy." Have you not felt the inspiration of holy worship? Have you not found the promise fulfilled,

"There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat?" Have you not felt

> "The speechless awe which dares not move,
> And all the silent heaven of love"?

And abased like Jacob, in devout astonishment, have you not said, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven?" Or transported at the manifestations of Divine condescension, when, like the elders, you have beheld the God of glory; or like Solomon, when the whole house has been filled with His glory, you have feebly uttered your feelings, "Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?" But what are all the sweet sighs of humility and abasement, or what all our highest transports of holy joy, compared with the bliss of the saints in glory, who are now "before the throne," and "serve Him day and night in His temple!" Brethren, we have friends there! We see them not; but they *are* there. We hear them not; but their notes are mingled with the voice of the great multitude. Some of them, ere they departed, heard the voices of those blessed spirits who were only waiting the command, not of Death, but of Christ, for them to go their way, and stand in their lot; or if they heard not the soft music, the dulcet voices of sister spirits,—it was a blessed delusion! Some of them, after the ties of earthly relationship were almost severed, and the veil of mortality had become so attenuated that but a few particles of corruption still cleaved to their holy spirits, as they were leaving their prison, and preparing themselves for their flight, have thought

they beheld ministering spirits, horses of fire and chariots of fire, invisible to us who retain our grossness, and have not yet approached near enough to the barriers of the spiritual world to discern the movements of these blessed embassies; or if their fancy has been disordered, they have had most heavenly dreams. But we know that they are before the throne. They lived and died in the faith; and they now inherit the promises. We know the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. We travelled with them, weeping as we went, to the valley of the shadow of death. We saw their struggles when they entered under the shadow of the cloud; and although we could not help them, we saw that an angel strengthened them. We saw that the cloud gave light to them although a dark side only was seen by us. We heard their shout of victory, as they journeyed close by the gates of death and hell. We saw them, in the exercise of vigorous faith, taking their last, distant look of earth, and their final adieu to a land of darkness and of the shadow of death. We saw them wave their hand in token of victory, stretching it forth to seize the awarded palm, and bowing their head unto death.

And while we beheld, they were taken up, and a cloud received them out of our sight. And, brethren, our faith can follow them still. Gliding swiftly through the planetary worlds, they pass into the heaven of heavens. There they behold on His august throne, the Ancient of days. The spheres which here are such bright spots of glory, roll darkly beneath His feet Whose hand upholds

and directs them all. We see, in that palace of angels and God, the vast assemblage of the intelligent creation. All the celestial hierarchies mingle their adorations and praises, in songs sweet and harmonious; but the great multitude have a part which angels cannot reach; a note too high even for them; a gust of praise which only those hearts can give forth which have been renewed by grace. Now, my brethren, look steadfastly up into heaven, and you shall say with St. John, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes?"

Heaven is represented,

III. AS A STATE OF THE HIGHEST SPIRITUAL ENJOYMENT.

"He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." And "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them," etc.

The dwelling of Jehovah in the midst of His ancient people, has been already alluded to. The phrases here are to be understood of an intimate and hallowing fellowship. The King shall dwell among His own people: the Father shall dwell among His beloved children. The provisions of heaven will meet the intellectual and spiritual appetite of the saints. The Lamb shall feed them, and refresh them with fountains of living water.

"He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them."

Then, 1. *They shall see God.* This is the peculiar privilege of heaven. "They shall see His face." We cannot now see Him: we cannot behold His glory and

live. There have always been in the Church some adumbrations of His glory. In Eden there was a sensible as well as spiritual manifestation; for Adam heard the sound of the Lord walking in the garden, and he knew that voice and presence, or he could not at once have recognized it. In succeeding ages, God in divers manners spoke to the patriarchs and prophets; and by many mysterious, or awful, or gracious signs, made men sensible of His presence. But in His Son, and in His gospel, and in His Church, He has especially made Himself manifest to men. In Christ was beheld the glory of the Father, full of grace and truth; so that Jesus said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Our present discovery of God is by faith; but then we shall see Him face to face. Here a devout contemplation of His works enables us to see God. The wide expanse of created nature, with all its various beauties; the government of the passions and over-ruling of the actions of men by Him who sitteth upon the waterfloods, and reigneth King for ever;—and especially the wondrous scheme of redeeming love, brings God very near to man, and the pure in heart shall see God. But how little a portion is heard of Him! How narrow and superficial our views of any of His works! How often does He hold back the face of His throne! But then we shall see God, for He shall *dwell* among us.

Yet we know not what these words mean! Shall there be some Shechinah, some sensible manifestation of the Divine glory, which we shall behold? or shall there be some new and finer sense, or some new faculty

imparted, or the perfection of some latent power, by which, in a higher sense than we can at present conceive, we shall see God? Or is it in that mysterious Person, Who has for ever united His own ineffable nature to our humanity, and Who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person,—that we shall see God? We cannot tell.

2. There will be *Divine communion* in the highest degree. "He shall dwell among them." "Truly our fellowship" now is "with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." But all is imperfect, shadowy, transient. God is seen through mediums suited to our impaired state: "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face;" now we know in part; then we shall know as also we are known. Probably then as now, Christ will be the great medium of communication. In heaven, it is the Lamb who opens the seals, Who reveals and communicates, Who feeds and refreshes.

3. In heaven there will be the utmost *satisfaction:* "the Lamb—shall *feed* them," etc. Another description of heaven refers us to the Eden which our first parents enjoyed, where were combined all the beauties and glories of the terrestrial creation, and which, from its sanctity, served to symbolize the heavenly paradise. The great peculiarity of the garden of Eden, was the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden, which was probably intended as a sacrament of salvation and eternal life, the appointed means of perpetuating that spiritual and vigorous life which Adam at first possessed. When he transgressed, he was forbidden the fruit of this tree, and

expelled the garden; but not before a gracious intimation of salvation by Christ was given. In heaven, the Tree of Life is planted in the midst of the paradise of God: the appointed sacramental food by which the spiritual nature of Adam was to be perpetuated and perfected, is restored, and man may put forth his hand, and take of the Tree of Life, and eat, and live for ever. No flaming sword turning every way, guards the access. On the contrary, it is now freely given. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Whether a literal or a figurative construction be put upon these terms, it is certain that the most perfect life, and the highest satisfaction, are imparted. The same view is given at the close of this book; and throughout the vision this idea of heaven is set forth; "I shall be *satisfied*, when I awake, with Thy likeness."

Or, if our view be directed to the particular image of our text, and the saints be considered as priests in the temple of God, they have their portion secured to them, as those who ministered at the altar, lived by the altar. Every priest had his portion secured to him; and he was fed at the table of the king. So in heaven: knowledge, the food of mind, and love the element of spiritual life, are abundantly supplied, and all knowledge shall perpetuate and perfect our love. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house, even of Thy holy temple."

To refresh and exhilarate the saints, there are also living springs of joy, living fountains of water. The

rivers of pleasure, which make glad the city of our God, are clear as crystal, not turbid, like the streams of present good, or tainted as now by the soil through which they flow. The river of the water of life, proceeds directly from the throne of God and of the Lamb. It flows not through the creature ; nor is it conducted by those means of grace which we now require. Those joys do not ebb and flow; they are not subject to the vicissitudes of health and prosperity, but like a deep, full, majestic river, fed by a living spring, an exhaustless Fountain, for ever satisfy and fill the souls of the redeemed. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water from this well of salvation.

The vision of Ezekiel, which appears to refer to the blessing of the present spiritual kingdom of Christ, beautifully harmonizes with the vision which John had, of celestial blessedness. The waters issued out from under the threshold of the house, waters to swim in; and whithersoever the rivers came, everything lived. "And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed : it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary : and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine." (Ezek. xlvii. 12.)

Finally, this blessedness is represented as being SECURED TO THE SAINTS BY THE SACRIFICIAL DEATH OF CHRIST ; "they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

As the ancient temple had its glory in the sacrifices,

and almost all things under the law were purged with blood; so in heaven, all things are referred to Christ's mediation. The Lord God and the Lamb are the light and glory of the temple. The Lamb dwells in the midst of the throne,—a Lamb as it had been slain. He alone is worthy to open the seals; and the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, receives the highest praises of heaven's host. And in our text, the redemption and salvation of men, is distinctly ascribed to the sacrificial death of Christ.

Obs. 1. *The blood of Christ as the Lamb of God, has procured heaven for the saints.* It was a forfeited inheritance, but is redeemed back to us by Christ. It was *before* the expulsion of our parents from the garden of Eden, and *after* the gracious promise of the Seed of the Woman, that "Unto Adam and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them;" most probably the skins of animals slain in sacrifice: thus teaching them the nature of His promise, revealing the doctrine of sacrifice, and confirming His gracious word, by this symbolical action, and sacramental institution, before they were driven forth into the wilderness of the world. Thus they took with them a gracious respite and the hope of ultimate return, when they went out from the special presence of the Lord. And thus also was a symbol established in the earthly paradise of that great fact which now is so fully exhibited in heaven,—salvation by the sacrificial blood of the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world. This great truth forms the burden of every song in heaven. Angels sing

of it as procured for man; and saints sing of it as themselves redeemed unto God by His blood.

2. *Actual meetness for these enjoyments is attributed solely to the blood of Christ.* "They have washed their robes, and made them white." The white robes represent the righteousness of the saints: their personal righteousness, for there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth. Redemption by purchase will not suffice; there must be redemption by power. Christ to you, Christ for you, Christ among you, will not suffice; it must be Christ *in* you the hope of glory. There must be faith in Christ's death—as an all-sufficient atonement; faith in Him as having loved *me*, and given Himself for *me*. This trusting in Christ for justification and acceptance, must precede our being sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption: but when we thus rest on Christ alone for present and final salvation, then are our names written in the Lamb's Book of Life. We learn the song which no unbelieving man can learn. Then shall we confess Him before men, showing by our every action, that our motto and rule is, "Whose I am and whom I serve." These are undefiled, and they follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth: there is no guile found in their mouth: they are without fault before the throne of God. But all their holiness is by the Spirit's application of the blood of Christ, through the instrumentality of their faith: and on earth, and in heaven, they will uniformly and for ever ascribe the praise, the entire glory of their salvation, to Christ the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the

world. Their robes are made white in the blood of the Lamb. "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

How far are we prepared for this state?

It is evidently a holy state. He that cannot find happiness in devotion; he who cannot be happy in God without a large measure of creature comfort, is manifestly unfit for heaven. There must be a correspondence between the mind and the state. Our hearts must be washed, our robes made white in the blood of the Lamb.

Have you, then, faith in Christ? Is He your Saviour? Do you know His power to save? Is your name, think you, in the Book of Life? If so, happy are you! "Whom having not seen, ye love," etc.

But if not, hasten, O hasten to Christ! Begin this hour to work out your salvation.

If you neglect this, if you postpone this all-important business, what hope have you? Should you delay until these things are hid from your eyes, who shall plead for you when vengeance comes upon you to the uttermost? *Then* is no repentance. Confession of sin is unavailing then.

SERMON V.—ELI TREMBLING FOR THE ARK OF GOD.

(Preached at Great Thornton Street Chapel, Hull, during the first Conference held in that town, August, 1848.)

"And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching: for his heart trembled for the ark of God."—1 Samuel iv. 13.

THIS was a most solemn and affecting circumstance. Here is an aged judge of Israel, in the most painful and humiliating position of seeing the ark of God in imminent peril, while he is not only unable himself to afford help, but has also the bitter reflection that its dangers have been increased, if not produced, by his own unfaithfulness. Nothing is recorded against Eli on the ground of personal virtue. "He seems to have been one of those quiet, easy, good-natured men, who love not to have their tranquillity disturbed, and who are loth to disturb that of others; who without being vicious themselves, by a passive tameness become the undesigned abettors of the sins of other men." But since men in power, both in the Church and in the world, are chargeable with the sins they do not prevent, as well as those which they commit, so we see Divine providence punishing their omission of duty. Eli's carelessness affected not

only his family, but produced a polluted church, and a distracted State; and fearful was the retribution. Let us look only to the contents of this chapter.

Israel had gone forth to meet the Philistines in battle, and were defeated. They sought deliverance from an iron yoke; but should have begun with repenting of their own sins. "Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men." Instead of heeding this rebuke, and humbling themselves before God, this people insolently asked, "Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to-day before the Philistines?" They had perverted their way; and then their heart fretted against the Lord. Their proposal agreed with the spirit here indicated. There is still no humiliation. The remedy they sought proves their ruin. Having lost the life of religion they yet wish for its privileges and blessings. And they discover the spirit which belongs to all fallen Churches,—a fondness for rituals and externals,—for the ark as an idol, an object of vain trust, when they no longer regarded the God of the ark. The symbol was admired,—yea, adored; it was deemed sufficient to carry it into the field of battle to secure certain victory. But they used no means to secure the favour of the God of Israel. Unholy men were with the ark of the covenant of God when it was brought into the field; and "Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again." "Carnal people triumph much in the external privileges and performances of religion, and build much upon them." But fear struck the hearts of the Philistines, who viewed the ark as a

god, or the symbol of the God of the Israelites; and it became necessary to rouse them with the thought, that if they did not conquer the Hebrews they would themselves become slaves. But it was not the valour of the Philistines which overcame the Israelites; but the God of battles had forsaken them, and given the victory to another people. A good cause often suffers for the sake of the bad men who undertake its defence. The slaughter of the Israelites was immense,—"thirty thousand footmen." The ark of God was taken captive by the Philistines, to show the Israelites that their confidence was vain and idolatrous, and that He would not have the ark profaned by superstition. The sons of Eli—the plague-spot of Israel—were slain. The noise and tumult aroused Eli, almost blind with age; and when in answer to his inquiries, he was told of the defeat, he could bear the tidings of the loss of his two sons; but when the messenger made mention of the loss of the ark of God, "he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died."

Such was the end of a man of private worth, but feeble in government; who thus involved all Israel, both in sin and punishment. But he was not only defective in government, he trusted, in common with the people, in the mere presence of the ark,—allowing those wicked men, Hophni and Phinehas, to fetch it from Shiloh, that it might be carried into the field of battle. He trusted in *externalism.*

He was probably now aware of his fatal errors; and offered a late repentance, and showed a deep concern for

the cause of Israel. He sat watching,—and "his heart trembled for the ark of God."

Let us make use of his case for our own instruction and edification; and consider

I. THE OBJECT,

II. THE GROUNDS, and

III. THE EFFECTS OF ELI'S SOLICITUDE.

I. THE OBJECT OF ELI'S TREMBLING ANXIETY IS THE ARK OF GOD.

The ark may be considered, *literally*, and *as a symbol*.

The ark *literally* was a chest of Shittim-wood, overlaid with gold, within and without. The lid was of pure gold, and was called the *mercy-seat*. At each end was a cherub formed of beaten gold; and the two cherubims covered the whole mercy-seat above, and with their wings extended, and their faces toward each other, they looked into the ark. It was the heart of the worldly sanctuary; and the first part of the temple-furniture directed by God to be made by the men whom He had instructed.

The ark was a *symbol* of the Divine presence. It was intended more especially to signify the throne of Jehovah in the midst of His people. "He made the temple His palace, and the ark His throne." This was the place of gracious intercourse. "There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony." Its sacredness on these accounts was such, that it was death for any but the appointed persons to

touch it. It was deposited in the holy place, as the appointed and appropriate token of the presence of Him who dwelt in the thick darkness.

Three considerations no doubt gave the ark importance in Eli's mind.

1. *In it was deposited the standard copy of the Law of God*,—the two tables of stone, called "the testimony," and "His covenant;" because that law contained the articles of covenant engagement between God and His people. On condition of obedience, He engaged to be their God. This was the fountain of their religious knowledge; and it was, therefore, valued by a people, who, with all their faults, highly prized the revelations of God.

2. *The ark was the place of sacrifice.* Here was the mercy-seat. Here God was propitiated, and His mercy was declared through the acceptance of sacrifice. This was the spot, in all the fair dominions of earth, where alone God had specially pledged Himself to meet with, and to bless His people. Here His people came to worship in the beauty of holiness; and they could say, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles!" Here the sprinkled blood pointed out the true Sacrifice; and faith anticipated the blessings of the Gospel. Here the saints were refreshed with angels' food. Such considerations might well make Eli tremble for the ark of God.

3. Over the ark *the Shechinah* dwelt,—a bright cloud which was perhaps from the beginning the peculiar manifestation of Deity. Fire and light have been the symbols of His presence—the most pure, subtile, searching

powerful elements, but faintly showing forth His knowledge, purity, and power. Because the Shechinah dwelt above the mercy-seat, all the tabernacle, and temple, and services, were peculiarly sacred. The Divine power accompanied the ark. It was called *the ark of His strength.* Mighty signs and wonders were wrought by this instrument. By it, the waters of Jordan were divided, and the people went through as on dry land. The walls of Jericho trembled before it, and fell down flat. Was it possible for Eli to remember what great blessings God had communicated to His favoured people by this means, and not to tremble for the ark of God? How precious was this token of the Divine presence and favour! And for the glory to depart from Israel was a calamity of all others to be deprecated and deplored!

These considerations suggest the proper objects of our solicitude.

1. *Corresponding with the first is the Sacred Scriptures.* We should be concerned to possess them, to circulate them, to preserve their purity, to know them and receive them as the true sayings of God. We have open vision. The Scriptures can hardly be corrupted;—certainly no more hidden or destroyed, so as to leave the land again in darkness. But there are causes of trembling anxiety even here. The Bible is the common property of mankind; and is not the restricted privilege of any people, or the pledge of peculiar privileges to any nation. Divine truth is reduced to a written form, that it may be the ultimate standard to all man-

kind, of truth and error, of right and wrong. It is the final arbiter of all religious controversy. It declares authoritatively all things which men can be required to believe, or be, or do. It announces the principles of the Divine government in this world; and the rules by which God will judge men at the last day. It therefore concerns us to see the churches deriving all their creed from the Bible, and enacting only such laws as the Scriptures justify. But especially does it concern us, that all God's people repair habitually to these living oracles, and profoundly submit their understanding and hearts to the authority of the Word of God. We may tremble lest our liberty of private judgment should lead us to less practical regard to the paramount authority of God's word. "To the law and the testimony."

2. Agreeing with the second of these considerations, is *the enjoyment of Divine Ordinances.* These we possess in rich abundance. Those of Divine institution we enjoy without molestation or fear,—until the provision is obviously quite equal to present requirements; that is to say, the willingness of our people to avail themselves of the ordinances. There is no let or hindrance to our multiplying prudential means of grace, according to our taste or necessities. We fear no early abridgment of our privileges in these respects: we are only concerned that they be duly improved.

3. But the third correspondency is one of the highest moment to us. As the Shechinah was the symbol of the Divine presence with Israel, so it is obvious that we find a corresponding object of solicitude in *the presence and*

power of God in His Church. This must ever be our great concern. We may not set our hearts on any inferior object. This was the glory of the former dispensation; how much more of the Christian! That had no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth. Whatever may distinguish a Church, this, and this only, is its real glory. All other matters in the Church of Christ only derive any importance they may possess from their connection with this,—that Christianity is the wisdom and power of God. That power is with the Church, for God dwells in the midst of His people. But He may hold back the face of His throne. He may not manifest forth His glory. The light, life, power of Christianity, consist in the manifested presence of the Holy Ghost. The doctrine of Divine Influence, is no more saving, or a source of blessing, than any other doctrine, unless it be vitally enjoyed,—reduced to actual experience.

This, therefore, must be our great concern. Let us see how, and in what respects, this must be.

First, *in connection with the purity and zeal of the Church of Christ.*

In outward conduct, it is comparatively easy to secure this purity. None are to be admitted, or retained, in the Church of Christ, who are not habitually moral. But the purity of which we now speak is of a higher order, not moral and outward only, but inward and spiritual: it refers to the heart, and to the holiness of that law which regards the thoughts and imaginations of the heart. A Church in which the privileges of the gospel, in all their fulness of Divine conformity, and the precepts of the

law, in all their spirituality and exactness,—form the standard after which all the people aspire ;—this is a holy Church. We do not expect to see a Church constituted as the present one must necessarily be, free from spot or wrinkle. What we now contend for is, that a mightier visitation of the Holy Ghost is necessary, to raise the Church to its *attainable* perfection. And nothing less than this will suffice. No exercise of discipline,—no talents in the Ministry,—no prudential regulations,—no attainments of knowledge, will ever produce such results, without the great power of God,—an increased measure of this gift Divine. Orderly conduct, serious demeanour, devout attendance on the public ordinances, and zeal for the extension of the Church,—are good, are necessary; but they may co-exist with a much lower state of grace than that we now contemplate. What we include is, the abiding Witness of the Spirit of God to our adoption, and present acceptance with God; the power to pray, so that we can cast all our care upon Him, with the sweet personal assurance that He careth for us,—and that we have the blessings we ask of Him; an habitual walk with God, so as to retain upon the heart a deep impression of His presence and love; a sensible growing conformity to the image of God in all holy tempers and conversation; a burning zeal; a deep anxiety for the glory of God and for the spread of His truth; a zeal that shall eat us up,—is not this the proper aim and pursuit of the Church of Christ? Is not this our glorious privilege in Christ? Can a believer walk in the fear of the Lord, who does not avoid the act and the

occasion of sin? can he enjoy the comforts of the Holy Ghost, unless he walks in the fear of the Lord? can any do and enjoy these things, and not be pressing after, and growing in sanctification of the Spirit?

The object of our solicitude is the presence of Christ in the Church, by the power of the Holy Ghost, purifying our hearts by faith, and making us holy in all manner of conversation. On this we must set our hearts. All things else are insufficient,—are comparatively insignificant. Whatever is enjoyed, comes to nothing, if God be not powerfully among us. Our religion is but a name if it do not make Christ thus sensible to our hearts. Without a known, enjoyed Comforter, we are dead while we live. Ours is but a formal Christianity,—a something which serves our reputation among people equally formal with ourselves,—but it will not serve us to die with; we must have a Divine assurance of acceptance,—vital love to God, power to keep His commandments, and an evangelical right to the Tree of Life.

My brethren, let this "sink down into our hearts." Our solicitude must not be primarily about our places of worship, the talents of our ministry, the beauty of our services, and the extent of our influence:—it must be for that power of the Holy Ghost which alone can make us holy, and prepare us for the kingdom of heaven.

Secondly, This presence of God is displayed by *the extension of the kingdom of Christ in the conversion of sinners.*

A holy Church cannot be a stationary Church;—because its members are necessarily deeply concerned for their Master, and travail in birth for souls; they are

full of loving, which is working zeal; and they will not only labour with all their might for so glorious an object as the conversion of sinners, but they will plead mightily with God for the promised power of the Holy Ghost. Now, as no means employed by the wisest and holiest of men, could be successful without God, so we cannot suppose that Christ would withhold His blessing where such agency was faithfully employed. This would be to falsify His own word; to forsake His own servants; to frustrate the end and design of His own death. But we have to suppose all this, and worse, if we suppose a holy Church, and no accession of members, no enlargement of the kingdom of Christ, no sinners converted to God. As it is contradictory to suppose a holy Church, and no zeal for Christ's kingdom; so it is contradictory and injurious to suppose a willing people, and an unwilling God! Where there is prayer, there will be power, and nowhere else; for prayer alone has power with God. A praying people will be an increasing people. "I will increase them with men like a flock." My brethren, we must be *concerned* for this increase, all of us, ministers, leaders, and people. We must seek, earnestly and with all our hearts, a revival of religion. *We must have it.* "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." If ordinary means are not sufficient, we must take off the roof. But into the more immediate presence of our Saviour we must come. Depend upon it God will honour such faith as this, as distinctly, as wonderfully, as ever He has done before.

Thirdly, intimately and essentially connected with these

manifestations of the presence of God, will be *the Divine power displayed in the Ministry—a Scriptural and vigorous Ministry.*

The Ministry is ordained to these ends,—to purify, preserve, feed, comfort, and extend the Church of God. It is Christ's great ordinance. It has never been superseded; it never will be. It is intended and adapted for all times, all countries, and all peculiarities of mankind. Where it is honoured, Christ is honoured; that is to say, where a minister is honoured for his office sake, and not for the sake of his talents, or usefulness for party purposes, or agreeable qualities, but as a servant of Christ. But just so far as a minister is honoured for other considerations, Christ's ordinance, as such, is left out and overlooked. I say, it is Christ's ordinance. He separates men unto the work. He imparts their gifts, and calls upon them to improve those gifts. But the great power of the ministry is not in the men, or in their gifts, or in their holding forth the truth; but in the presence—in the mighty accompanying influence—of the Holy Ghost.

Everything without this is vanity. The truth must be preached, and made manifest to every man's conscience in the sight of God, by close, personal, powerful application;—but all is vain, but as the Lord the Spirit puts His own power into these well-adapted means. A powerful ministry is a ministry full of the unction of the Holy Spirit; a ministry which searches as with a candle; in which truth convinces, slays, converts, comforts, sanctifies,—and thus becomes the vehicle of the saving power of the Holy Ghost.

II. THE GROUNDS OF ELI'S SOLICITUDE.

1. *The withdrawal of the Divine favour on account of Israel's sin.* God's controversy with Israel had begun; and when the Philistines had already overcome the Israelites once, Eli had every reason to fear lest God should forsake them, and allow them to fall into the hands of their enemies. Eli knew Who alone could turn the battle to the gate; and he trembled, for he loved his people.

2. *He could not forget his own share in the general unfaithfulness.* We have shown that this was very considerable. He was deeply implicated in the wretched state of religion, and in the shattered condition of the State. Now was the time to remember his own doings, which were not good. Thus both public and private considerations moved him to fear.

Let us advert to the grounds we have for anxious solicitude in reference to the ark of God.

The general ground is the want of success, the low state of religion, the paucity of conversions, and similar considerations. It is for a lamentation that the Evangelical Churches generally make the same complaints with ourselves; and not only in this country, but in America also. All the Churches appear to languish. All complain that few are added to their numbers; that there is a decrease of religious fervour; that family religion, in the way of catechetical instruction of children, is decreasing generally; that comparatively few of the children of God's people are brought into the Church; that a worldly spirit, and worldly conformity are increasing among the professed disciples of Christ, and that the

Churches are becoming passive, instead of active;—"pools of water," instead of "broad rivers and streams."

There have always been periods in the history of the Church, when religion has declined. It is in Churches as in individuals,—religion too much ebbs and flows, fluctuates, and retrogrades. The fact is indisputable. But the question is, Is it necessary and unavoidable? Is a languishing state of religion, a mere result of Divine sovereignty? Does God leave His Church, and impoverish His ordinances, and withhold His blessing from the seed sown, because He will do it, and for no other reason? As some men speak in reference to personal religion,—must we expect seasons of dryness and sterility? Are they to be looked for in the course of things? In a cycle of years, must religion suffer a paralysis? Is there something in the progress of time, in the mutations of society, in the advance of civilization, in the very results of Christian success, that forbids our hope of uniform progress? And are we then to sit down under a necessity against which it is vain to contend? and merely to wait the lapse of winter, and to hope for the return of spring? These are questions worthy of our most serious consideration. Much, in reference to the ark of God, depends on the result of our review of such questions.

1. The first thing appears to be, *the consideration of the alleged fact, the decay of religion.*

It is in vain to attempt the comparison of one age with another. We only live in one; and the question turns upon a spirit and temper and practice, the impress

of which can only be caught from the living Church, and by contemporaries. But whatever advantages we may claim, and we hope there are many, by the comparison of the activity and energy and enterprise of the present age with any preceding it since the Reformation, we are to consider the present condition and prospects of the Church. And perhaps we should not say the Church generally, but our own Churches.

In the Connexion generally, for two or three years, there has been no increase: last year there was a decrease at home of some thousands; this year, we fear, there will be on the whole no increase, notwithstanding the increase in several Districts. In these figures there can be no deception. It is a most discouraging fact, and we are unwilling to advert to it: but it is necessary. We shall seek no remedy, until we admit disease.

But it is immediately replied, "We err in laying too great stress upon numerical increase." But what is too great stress? We take the statistics every quarter; we report them quarterly and yearly. Every other institution that seeks the co-operation of our fellow-men, and aims at increase of party, estimates success by augmentation of numbers.

Undoubtedly it is possible to increase numbers with undue haste; to give too short a trial to Church-members; and to admit persons too readily upon their profession of being converted. The same laxity may lead to the upholding of numbers improperly. An unconverted moralist has no more business in the Church of Christ than an unconverted drunkard; the quiet,

money-loving professor than the noisy, ranting antinomian. The fallen worldling, who serves only himself by making his religious character a means of gain, has less right to be in the Church, than the sudden convert from theft, or uncleanness, who has not been proved by a year's watchful scrutiny. The men who are so piously afraid of our too rapidly increasing our numbers, should remember that there is both more probability of our detecting the failure of those who have been recovered from gross sin, and of getting rid of them, than of the detection and expulsion of the men whose outward adorning is that of moral exactness, but whose inward spirit is that of a thorough addictedness to this present world: the former are more likely to fall into foul sin, and to shock the righteous persons who have no need of repentance.

The simple truth is, no man can soberly say any Church is prosperous with declining numbers. We say it not of other Churches,—why should we think it of our own?

Now, the first great point is, I say, to admit the fact of our real state. When we have finished all special pleading, the truth remains the same. Once it was otherwise: we showed our prosperity by the addition of thousands in a year.

Other points of the case need the same homely dealing. Is it not a fact that comparatively few of the children of our people are brought to God? Are we not resting in their being in a hopeful state? Are we in no danger of losing sight altogether of the doctrine of conversion—

of the new birth?—of thinking our children, religiously educated, and moral, and fond of many features of Methodism, and some parts of religion, in a safe state? Are we not accessory to their being unconverted; first, by abstaining from all direct means for their actual conversion? Do we ever talk to them, and pray with them, and take them to such means of grace as God often honours by converting the souls of others? Do we strive to bring it about, by all possible means, as we should wish we had done if they were to die in their present state, and should in their dying hour upbraid us with our neglect? Secondly, by offering indirect hindrances to their conversion: such as, our own heedlessness, neglect of the means of grace, reducing our religion to formalism, uttering foolish and damaging criticisms upon ministers and sermons, which sap all religious convictions, and reduce *hearing the word*—a matter of eternal and infinite moment—to a mere exercise of intellectual power; by allowing them in the vanity of dress, and in worldly amusements and pursuits which we dare not practise ourselves, and which our consciences disapprove as inimical to religion, and therefore dangerous and to be avoided. And yet some day we shall mourn that they are not converted; and perhaps, even in this world, shall wish we had been too poor to know the temptations of the world in these respects, and godly enough to have given up the world to save the souls of our children.

Whatever the cause, we must admit the fact, or there is no remedy. There is not the same amount of religious care and culture that some of the men whom we applaud

instead of imitating, bestowed upon their children, to God's eternal praise.

And will any one doubt of the increase of a worldly spirit in the Church? I grant many allowances are to be made for the progress and changes of society; but when you have made every allowance for the change of times,—is it not obvious that the distinction between the Church and the world is narrower than formerly? I speak not against the gain of riches, but the misuse of them. Great diligence in worldly affairs is not only lawful, but commendable,—yea, obligatory. But wealth may not be sought merely for worldly ends—to be spent upon our lusts: to be a means of living like men of the world in the same station, and vying with them; of keeping company with them; of partaking of their luxuries; and of going with them to places of mere carnal amusement.

The eager pursuit of the world abridges time for devotion, interferes with family duties, withdraws men from the week-night services, and injures their simplicity and heavenly-mindedness. And there can be no doubt that business generally is much more eagerly pursued now than it ever has been.

Are we ready to admit the facts of the case in any degree? Is there any reason for us to tremble for the ark of God?

But suppose that it be thus admitted, all ground of apprehension is not removed: far from it. For,

2. *We must take care how we hope to mend this state of things by mere expedients; and the tendency to this, is one ground of fear.*

Next to the denial of the fact that the Church is not progressing, is the evil of applying false remedies. Some complain of systems being wrong—wrong in principle—not adapted to the times, and requiring considerable modification before we can hope for greater success. Methodism, which I hope, in the main is but another word for Christianity, at least agrees with it in one important respect;—in elasticity, and capability of adaptation to changing circumstances. In its principles, it cannot be changed; in its plans it may be greatly modified. But it will be well to remember what it has achieved; and that it has never been forwarded by many favourable circumstances. It has gathered strength by encountering difficulties, and courage from being opposed. That which it chiefly opposes, formal godliness, and open irreligion, are the same in this age as in the last. It will therefore be fitting to inquire first of all, if Methodism, as to the mainspring of the system,—vital religion,—be just the same as formerly, before we take the machinery to pieces to reconstruct it. Is our religion as simple, as humble, as self-denying, as full of love, of zeal, of prayer, of faith,—as when it glowed in our first fathers? Can we sacrifice our good name in the world as readily for Christ as they? and forego our own interest, and ease, and pleasure, as cheerfully for the advancement of Christ's kingdom?

It is in vain that we attempt to mend the system unless we first attempt to mend ourselves. It is an easier thing to cry out for change, than to do our own duty. We ought first to see that all that the present system is

capable of effecting is accomplished; and when it fails—thus faithfully wrought, and from no fault of ours—to edify our own souls, and to furnish us with abundant means of saving the souls of others, then let us cry out for change and enlargement: but it is a hollow plea to cry out the system is in fault, when many parts of it, which once wrought wonders, are now lying in rust for want of use.

It matters not what is the plea,—errors of polity and scheme, or errors of administration,—if men are disposed to shift the blame from themselves, they will be sure to plead thus, and either blame others, or kindly show that no person is to blame; and then the fault is indirectly charged against the Head of the Church Himself. There is a constant tendency to recede from experimental religion; and when we lose a measure of vital religion, we are disposed either to quarrel with everybody else, or to lean upon *externalism*, in some of its multiform manifestations. Puseyism, as it is called, is of human nature. Some question of meat and drink, of something external, is sure to be brought in to supplement our religion, when we lose the vital power of godliness. Everything, however, is a mere expedient, which is adopted as a remedy for a low state of religion; which is substituted for personal repentance, and confession, and humiliation; which is resorted to, as lessening the necessity of going back to first principles and practices; which can allay our fears, and quiet our consciences, without a vigorous effort to recover lost grace, and earnest and persevering prayer for the return of the Holy Ghost. We might as well

expect God to bless our religious efforts, when conducted with no higher object than to benefit the finances, or position, or power of our Church, as to expect that He will send us success because we devise ingenious substitutes for the presence and power of God.

Let us consider,

III. THE EFFECTS OF ELI'S SOLICITUDE.

1. *He trembled—his heart trembled.* What a state of agitation and anxiety do these words describe! No mother fears for her babe, as Eli does for the ark.

2. *He watched.* His eyes were dim, but his soul was alive to discern the danger; and he had patriotism and love of the Church sufficient to lead him to put himself into the way of helping, as far as his little remains of strength would allow.

How striking a lesson for us, both ministers and people,

1. As ministers, *to give ourselves wholly to our proper work.*

We are set apart as God's servants. We are Christ's ambassadors. We are not entangled with the affairs of this life, that we may give ourselves wholly to this ministry that we have received from Christ. We are stewards of the mysteries of God. It is expected of stewards that a man be found faithful. We may not please ourselves; nor men, but for their edification. One is our Master, even Christ, and if we gain His approval, we gain everything; but if He should frown, where *is* our gain? If we tremble, we shall seek to be faithful. We

shall warn with all fidelity; we shall declare the whole counsel of God, not studying what will be palatable, but only what is most necessary and will most tend to edification. We shall feel we stand in Christ's stead; and shall strive to do as we believe He would do, so far as the example of the Great Teacher is rule for us.

We are to watch over the flock, caring for the sheep, feeding them, and bringing back the wanderers to the fold.

This is our calling,—this is our work,—and we must give ourselves wholly to it,—from a deep conviction of duty, of obligation to Christ Whose we are, and Whom we serve, and from delight in the work itself. It must be our pleasure and joy. It must absorb our thoughts and cares; and be the spring of our fears and hopes. All our powers and resources are consecrated to it, and demanded by it; and all is too little for its proper and full execution.

O for this trembling anxiety,—this deep and earnest solicitude! To live only for Christ, and for His cause!

2. *To seek a renewal of our commission, and a more perfect qualification for our work.*

The *spirit* of the ministry is everything to the ministry; and we cannot rightly discharge these high duties, unless we feel that we are Christ's ambassadors,—act under His direct commission,—and carry with us a sense of His royal and gracious presence. The anointing of the Holy Ghost can alone thus qualify us. See the first apostles and ministers of Christ after their Pentecostal visitation! What authority! What power! What unction! What

success! Look at the reformers,—men whose secret strength lay in their commerce with heaven; whose boldness was boldness in Christ; and whose triumph was, "the hand of the Lord was with them!" Let us consider our own fathers in the ministry, second to none in natural gifts, in ministerial qualifications for their peculiar work, in courage, in self-denial, in devotedness, in flaming zeal, in overwhelming power, in glorious success. We are their successors. They have laboured, and we enter into their labours. We enjoy their system of truth, their polity, their field of usefulness, and the same promises. When first the love of God burst forth as a hidden fire in our hearts,—and in the full force of our newly-received commission, we rushed forth upon sinners to pull them out of the fire,—what power was in our words! what unction in our preaching! what prevalency crowned our intercessions! Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Hath He shut up His compassions? Let us seek a renewed baptism of His Spirit. Let us ask Him to send us forth again as at first,—nay, with greater power, and more complete qualifications,—both to feed the flock of God, and to gather sinners to Christ.

3. *To exercise a stronger faith for the power of the Holy Ghost.*

Undoubtedly there are promises which concern ministers alone;—promises of gifts and of grace; of power, of love, and of a sound mind; promises of guidance into the truth, of recollectedness; of power to speak right words; of success. All that a minister as mediator can desire, is included in the one great pro-

mise of the presence of Christ in the power of the Holy Ghost. He is imparted to ministers and to the Church in answer to prayer, and in proportion to faith. There is a faith by which the just do live; and there is a faith which more especially belongs to ministers as such,—the faith which expects the Holy Ghost to accompany His own truth. He will not leave His truth wholly without witness even when declared by an ungodly man; but He will especially and chiefly honour it in proportion to the faith we, as ministers, exercise in His fidelity, and the fervour with which we seek His effectual blessing. The men whom He has chiefly honoured were men of such strong faith and fervent prayer. If men of lofty intellect and the greatest learning are as simple in their dependence, and as pure in their design only to glorify Christ as the men of lesser gifts, they will not have a less blessing from God, nor be less successful; but the temptation is doubtless strong to self-dependence and self-sufficiency; and God will not give His glory to another. To hide pride from man, He will often bless with larger success the more feeble instrument, that no flesh should glory in His presence.

Left incomplete, but with the following *mem.*

As people,

1. Make the interests of religion your supreme concern.
2. Seek in order to save souls.
3. Plead with God for the Holy Spirit, especially on ministers and ordinances.

SERMON VI.—THE SUCCESSFUL MINISTER.

AN OUTLINE.

"For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord."—Acts xi. 24.

TEXT explains the reason of gladness—and the secret of ministerial success. *Good man—of large and catholic feeling*—full of the Holy Ghost.—Word with power; and of *faith*, which maintained both piety and power.—Particulars of his history.

Here is a specimen of the first labourers in Christian vineyard—Simple, earnest, faithful: Opposition and persecution prepared them. God was with them: success proved it.—Eminently the character of the first Methodist preachers.

I. HE WAS A GOOD MAN.

Different estimates of goodness—Commercial: solvent, rich, honourable. Social: jovial, hospitable, kind; good in the relations and duties of life. Moral: free from gross offences—industrious, honest, truthful. "Good sort of people." Divine—Absolute—None good but God.

By *nature* none good, no, not one—Corrupt, and guilty—Only renewal can make good—An apparent approximation in *nature and by education.* But a good

man, in God's estimate, is a man renewed by His Spirit—Good by conversion—new creation.

Not merely regenerate, but *eminently* good.

1. *Integrity*—"A good man and a *just*," said of Joseph, the counsellor. (Luke xxiii. 50.)—Special regard to *Gospel morality.* A worldly standard disavowed—"Be not conformed to this world." There is a morality which the world can understand and approves: honesty—sobriety—duties of second table. *Outer circle* of obvious and useful society morals—may obtain from human motives.

An inner circle where such morality proceeds from higher motives—Gospel principles—Same actions from evangelical motives.

An innermost circle of such acts as only true Religion can dictate and inspire—Morals which only the Church, and not the World, can appreciate. Peculiar to the Gospel—*Humility—Purity—Nonconformity to the world—Separation—Self-denial and bearing the cross—Bearing opprobrium—the offence of the cross—Goodwill to all—Love of enemies—Love to the brethren.*

All this applies strictly to Christian ministers—The fulness and exactness of Christian morality especially required of them. They have to *preach* a full, evangelical morality—Not of Epictetus and the philosophers; but of Christ and His Apostles—in *every* respect so superior.

There is, however, more required in a good man who is a good *minister.* There is a *ministerial* integrity. "In doctrine showing uncorruptness." He may not dilute, abate, temporize with, the Word of God. Integrity obliges him to preach only *what he believes* if *not all* he believes.

If he no longer holds any vital truth of his own Church he is bound to confess this to the Church authorities. He may not hold back from the people the truth either to avoid offence, or to please taste. If errors exist, he is bound to furnish antidote, truth—and to banish, and drive away strange doctrine.

May not extenuate sin—plead on behalf of worldly conformity—ridicule or satirize persons whose opinions, prejudices, or conscience, constrain to adopt peculiarities of dress or custom. *Instruct*, but not perplex or annoy—Nor omit to preach against prevailing vices in the Church of Christ, because general, or high in repute and influence, or from tenderness to personal friends.—Keep high the standard of moral goodness.

Good man, a minister, can make no difference between rich and poor, friends and opponents. In administration of discipline, "first pure, then peaceable, without partiality," etc.

A man of integrity, will support and defend his own system of doctrine and polity, and not weakly yield to the opinion of others, or cowardly allow it to be understood that he greatly sides with opponents. In his opinions, he distinguishes between what is vital and essential, and what secondary and subordinate. In matters on which the Church ought to act, he will endeavour to form conscientious and enlightened opinions—that may guide others—for the New Testament contains such a principle as obedience to pastors—not expunged—only forgotten. In all religious matters he should maintain clear, decisive integrity of opinion

and teaching: but in other matters may properly say, "I am doing a great work, and cannot come down." "Let the dead bury their dead."

2. The second feature in the good man is *benignity*. Goodness of disposition; kindness of nature; graciousness; beneficence. There is a distinction between right and kind,—the rigidity of righteousness, and the suavity of goodness. Apostle's comparison: "Scarcely for a *righteous* man will one die; yet—for a *good* man," etc. —The good man is not tenacious of his rights; nor fond of controversy; nor severe and censorious in judging. He is mild and bland in disposition; even and calm and forgiving in temper; "gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." He is full of charity; the friend of all, the enemy of none.—Meek, modest, unassuming, peaceful, friendly.—"Be pitiful, be courteous."

These virtues eminently desirable in a Christian minister; benignity, graciousness, kindness of disposition, and of manner; affectionateness, especially towards the poor of Christ's flock. Does not require compliance with whims.

Practically, in works of charity and mercy, his life one continued good work.

Barnabas one who sold possessions, and laid them at the feet of the Apostles.

The question arises, How does this exhibition of the character of Barnabas, as a *good man*, bear on ministerial success?

Much every way. Character is everything in a

minister. If not fair, an angel's talents are vain. Ought to be exemplary—"above suspicion"—"A good man will guide his affairs with discretion,"—"rule well his own house"—like Abraham. Crime, offence, minor immoralities in a minister, are not spots on the sun—but a partial eclipse—Even if in *a haze* of doubtfulness he will not succeed—Character *is power* with all men. It covers a multitude of defects of talent and manner. It prepares every one to receive the word "as of sincerity." It gives a minister confidence and great boldness, especially in preaching practical truths, to say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?"—Self-consistency makes a man able to speak home on duty—even the innermost-circle duties—self-denial, bearing the cross, etc. Exhortations come with ill-grace, when not practised—but when "fitted in our lips" * often enable a minister to bear up under slander, and evil report.

And goodness is equally influential in giving a tone of tenderness,—the winning, moving voice of love. One becomes serious, and plain, and earnest, and moving, and successful.

Barnabas, "a son of consolation."

We and our people want more of the practical Christianity of Law and à Kempis.

The purity of the Christian ministry has always been its strength—and ever must be. Always so in Methodism. The first requirement is *conversion*,—in sound sense. An annual examination highly important. A sinful minister may escape for awhile; but few long escape. If we

* Fuller.

once fail in faithfulness on this point, we are undone; then, as we ought, we shall give place to more worthy and more faithful people. "So let all Thine enemies perish."

This is our strength. This the secret of success. Not said that Barnabas was a man of splendid talents, but a man of God, devoted to his work. Without goodness, a minister is a curse, and that in proportion as he excels in talent and other power. Nothing so mighty as goodness.

II. HE WAS FULL OF THE HOLY GHOST.

This expression frequent in Acts. This the baptism Christ predicted. (Acts i. 5.) Deacons to attend on pecuniary matters must be men of honest report, and full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom. Stephen, one of them. The grand peculiarity of the Christian dispensation is, "*the* promise of the Father:"—in the early ages abundantly poured out on the Church, and especially ministers, both in graces and gifts.

This fulness of Divine Influence imports,

1. *Eminent holiness.* Barnabas was thus made eminent for piety: for the Holy Spirit is the Author and Giver of spiritual life. This life is in Christ as its Fountain and Fulness, and in believers by their union with Christ by faith. (Gal. ii. 20.) Hence every grace which forms and ornaments the Christian character is a fruit of His direct agency and indwelling. It is "the fruit of the Spirit, in all goodness and righteousness and truth." (Eph. v. 9.) All God's works display Himself—the smallest and meanest;

but in holy natures most gloriously. Not a fitful glare like lightning, but like the opening light of day, or the steady glow of summer's sun, ripening all to full harvest.

It imports that every faculty is under Divine influence —*Judgment*—not to preserve from all error,—but to save from all fatal and pernicious errors. *Understanding*, open to truth—as Christ's disciples. (Luke xxiv. 45.) *Will* to make fully agree with will of God. *Affections*—regulated —elevated—sanctified—fixed on God. *Conscience* truly instructed—and umpire amid the clamours of passion and self-interest.

It is further, to have every grace and fruit of the Spirit in maturity and fulness: not stunted and dwarfish; not half-ripe grapes, but mellow and perfect. To have the seed of sin's disease removed; and the full power of Christianity brought in. To enjoy the abiding testimony of the Spirit,—the witness of entire sanctification,—and an increasing fulness of God.

Such a fulness is especially needed by *ministers*. Ordinary measures will not suffice. If it were only from their constant connection with holy things, how necessary is eminent piety to save them from formality! The most spiritual services constantly performed; whatever the state of the heart;—how impossible to keep up a lively sense of Divine things, and a spiritual taste, without a perpetual flux of heavenly influence. Even in reading the Scriptures, we are apt to read for others, more as *preachers* than *Christians*. If otherwise, our constant engagement in the service of the sanctuary would always profit us. Fulness of the

Holy Ghost is necessary to fidelity—to seriousness—to spirituality—to godliness.

How essential to the spirit of the ministry! To deal with souls—not professionally as a physician who knows nothing of his patient yet faithfully discharges his duty to him. That will not suffice. All must be earnest and fresh, to be powerful or winning.

2. This fulness imports *eminent gifts*. The same Spirit is the Author of both natural and extraordinary gifts. He creates the vigorous understanding, and forms the eloquent tongue. For a naturally clear perception of truth, and a perspicuous and vigorous utterance of it, we are indebted to the Source of the Sevenfold Gifts. The diversity of gifts for the various offices of the Church and duties of the ministry, are His bestowment. "All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." The power to expound the Scriptures or to discuss a topic, or to illustrate truth, or vigorously to apply it, is *originally* from Him, however it may have been afterwards cultivated. These gifts are immensely diversified; and in every man we see the natural character and individual bias and the results of experience and cultivation,—yet are they divers gifts of the Holy Ghost. No man should despise or envy another's gift, but honour all men. Neither should any man hope for eminence, or even increase of gifts, without laborious use of what he has, and the most strenuous diligence in the improvement of every gift.

The bearing of this topic on ministerial usefulness, is most obvious. God ordinarily only honours good men,

and honours them in proportion to their holy devotedness,—their fervour and zeal. The exception, rare and mysterious, only proves the rule. It is natural to expect that God should delight to honour the men who honour Him, and the men who, receiving their qualifications from Him, use all in the spirit of dependence and devotedness. The man who thus studies as if the success wholly depended on his right and effectual adaptation of his matter, and style of address,—and yet depends absolutely and implicitly on the promised agency of the Spirit of God,—is likely to be honoured with success. Nothing can *convince*—nor *convert* the sinner, in heart and conscience, but the Spirit of God. All preparation—all persuasion—all moral force—all of truth itself, is but the means. "The hand of the Lord was with them." Others may attract, be popular for a season—flame and crackle; but winning souls, converting and saving sinners, is by men full of the Holy Ghost. Such men have a just authority in the Church of God,—a diffusive power in spreading, and an effective energy in preaching.

III. BARNABAS WAS FULL OF FAITH.

We understand faith here in the ordinary sense of reliance on God's testimony and promise. And it may be understood

1. *In reference to personal religion.*

Faith in a minister here is precisely what it is in an ordinary Christian. Ministers have no patent rights—no royal road to heaven. They subsist spiritually day by day, on the same conditions, and the same food as

ordinary Christians—Faith in the *truths*, *privileges*, and *laws* of the Gospel. There is, however, in ministers, greater need of fulness of faith; for they have more than the ordinary trials of Christian men. They have peculiar temptations, both to presumption and despondency. They are more prone to trust in the multitude and spirituality of their services; in their official zeal and labours; in their influence and usefulness. They are, on the other hand, often faint, although pursuing; discouraged because they see little fruit of their labour, and apt to think all in vain. They have fewer trials from the world; but they have more and heavier from the Church. To maintain the supremacy of Christian motives when flattered or despised; to seek only their Master's glory, when other glory is placed before them; and to serve God in all things, even painful and crossbearing service, with grateful cheerfulness; and to conquer the flesh which seeks rest and indulgence, in the midst of a perpetual round of painful study and hard work,—these things, and a thousand others, require that a minister should be full of faith for his own soul's health and comfort.

The expression must be understood,

2. *In reference to the work of the ministry.*

Here strong faith is necessary. Whoever looks into the doctrine of human depravity and its corroboration in facts, must often feel—"Can these dry bones live?" And he who knows himself—his unworthiness, and unfitness, must often feel—"Send by whom Thou wilt,"—not by me. "I am but a child." And yet here is the

work, and I am His servant. Fulness of faith excludes fear and doubt of God.

There must be strong faith in reference *to danger*—Confidence in God, courage and tranquillity. *Confide character and family and interests*—all to God. If reputation obscured, motives maligned—leave it.

There must be *full confidence in Divine truth:* that is to say as *adapted*—and *alone adapted* to the work of awakening and saving men. Although truth is not salvation, but only its instrument, yet we must have full confidence that it alone is saving truth: that no refinements—no mere subtlety—no false philosophy—no artifice of eloquence—has the *natural fitness* for the end which revealed truth has.

3. *Confident expectation of the presence of Christ in the work of the ministry, to give success and grace.*

This the most eminent work of faith in the Christian minister. Some do work and leave it, careless of results; others believe that truth, clearly and earnestly preached, must necessarily produce fruit. Some despair of seeing themselves made useful, or only look for it in some *general sense*, and small degree, and not in the great seal of God in conversion of sinners. While this faith must be distinguished from the carnal presumption of the man who expects success because *he* has preached a powerful sermon,—it does expect success. A Christian minister—full of faith, knows that he cannot labour in vain. He knows he is sent to open blind eyes. He is doing the work the Master has sent him to do, and expects his Master's presence, help, and blessing. He looks for

success, and cannot rest without it. It is the proper end of his labours. Without success in adding to the Church, all is but sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. The minister who is easy without it has lost, if he ever had, the true spirit of his work. He that does not travail in birth for the salvation of souls is no true successor of the Apostles.

1. Let us consider well *the standard of ministerial qualifications*. We may, *must*, cultivate human qualifications.

The Jewish priesthood descended in direct line of genealogy. Moral qualifications were then less marked. —But under Christian dispensation only *good men*. Whoever ordains men to this ministry without full proof, not merely infringes on the prerogative of Christ, but overthrows the very throne of Christ in His own kingdom. *He* maintains the prerogative of choosing His own ambassadors. The ministry is not a theatre for the display of talent, power of reasoning, appeal, and public teaching and preaching;—it is a Divine office; it is created by Christ for His own ends in His own kingdom. It is not a mere effort to do good. Men may—Christians *must* use every means for good; but here a man must be called by Him Whom he serves.—*Grace*, *gifts*, and *fruit*, the *criteria* of such a call.—Where either is lacking, *no minister*. Study the portrait of St. Paul.

But here is a standard after which all may aspire. Does not supersede use of means, and human improvement; but the most special qualification *and most essential is*, *goodness* and faith. Love is more powerful than all things else. This alone can save from assumed,

temporary earnestness and forced official zeal—and give authority. Will not force up numbers as matter of religious policy. Here Barnabas—then Paul—all combine,—none envy,—all rejoice.

Our strength as a body of ministers is in our piety—not in our talent.

2. *The certainty of success to true and holy Christian ministers.*

The question of success is all-important. At present, all Churches are mourning over scantiness of success. All profess to see various difficulties and hindrances, and the remedies are as various. Many think that changes in the constitution of society are necessary; and even rest on the want of extended civil rights as the reason why their ministry is comparatively unproductive in spiritual results. Others think that modifications of ecclesiastical polity will bring about the desirable results. And others rest in secondary considerations concerning the ordinary qualifications of ministers. Has not Christianity triumphed under every form of political and civil government? Is any platform of government plainly laid down in New Testatment, that we must say this alone is clearly and absolutely acceptable and proper? Has God ever limited His influence to any particular form of Church government? Is learning, or philosophy, or eloquence the first essential to success? Were the first Apostles men of this character? or rather, were they not exceedingly diverse in natural character and talent, in reasoning and eloquence? Were not the first preachers in the second great Reformation, as diverse,—the

Wesleys and Whitefield, and Grimshaw and Nelson?—and yet through them all, "much people was added unto the Lord."

It has been thus uniformly and universally. In every Church the eminently successful minister is a Barnabas. None other is greatly honoured; all are honoured with success just in proportion to these qualifications. It is not greatness, but goodness, which God honours; not talent, but faith; not eloquence, but prayer; not adaptation, but Divine influence. But the men of God must succeed. The ministry is God's great ordinance; not by legislation, or education, or philosophy, or merely moral means; but by His simple truth delivered by holy and earnest men. This is His decree; and it cannot be annulled. All other means are insufficient; this cannot fail. "As truly as I live, saith the Lord, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." Superior talents do not carry the day—many are utterly ruined by levity, genteel sensuality, pride, and unwatchfulness.

I beseech you to suffer the word of exhortation, even from one "not meet to be called an Apostle." I am deeply, but alas! not sufficiently conscious of my own unworthiness and unfitness for the work here assigned to me. But I urge *myself*, while I entreat *you*, to aim at the standard of ministerial qualification in our text. We cannot all attain to greatness: we may all attain to whatever standard of goodness we propose. The Holy Spirit is free for all. His sanctifying power is secured to the Church by the covenant of God. But to us there are special promises. He who gives us our com-

mission also secures all needful good. He promises to endue us with power—with energy—with moral might —with conquering force. We are His witnesses,—His ambassadors, acting in Christ's stead. O let us preach as in His sight! as if we were of the little company to whom He said, when gathered at Bethany, and before He was parted, as if reluctantly, from them, "Go ye into all the world." Let us feel now the force and freshness of our commission, as if His blessed tones had scarcely died away. Let our hearts warm and burn within us, while we reflect on the gracious promise of His all-inspiring and all-sustaining and all-powerful presence,— "Lo, I am with you alway."

SERMON VII.—"BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT."

(*Preached at the Second Hull Conference*, 1858.)

"Be filled with the Spirit."—Ephesians v. 18.

THIS exhortation is addressed to those who are already made partakers of the Holy Ghost,—"to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." They had "faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints." But to them the Apostle opens out more glorious privileges, as we see especially in the first and third chapters. He then urges upon them a variety of practical duties; and the exhortation of our text shows where the strength of the Christian lies for every duty; since he that is "filled with the Spirit," must be equal to the demands of the *Christian law* of holiness; for he will find both *motive* and *strength* to meet the claims of the gospel in all holy obedience.

For it is also to be observed that the exhortation does not refer to any *extraordinary* influences of the Spirit. These, whether the gift of prophecy, or of discerning of spirits, or of divers tongues, or of working miracles, or any other extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, are not matter of exhortation, but of sovereign bestowment; they are not gifts which we are to seek; and they may be possessed by those who are not profited thereby; and

they are nothing without charity. When bestowed on the first Christians they did not imply saving grace; and the Apostle supposes that they may exist where there is not Christian charity. "Covet earnestly the best gifts" for edification; "and yet show I unto you a more excellent way," "follow," press "after charity,"—Christian love, which is the fulfilling of the law.

The exhortation, therefore, refers to the ordinary and saving operations of the Holy Ghost and the privileges of believers in receiving Him Who is the Author of all good in us; Who gives without measure; and is ready to impart a fulness of His blessed, sanctifying, and comforting influences to the Church of Christ.

That it does not refer to the believers of that age only, is evident from the Epistle being directed, not only to the saints which are at Ephesus, but also to the faithful in Christ Jesus, meaning, plainly, in every age. These Epistles are the standing law of the Christian Church, the great depository of evangelical doctrines and promises. If therefore the duties belong to successive ages, so must the privileges; and if the text be understood as a duty, it yet stands also as a promise: for however we seek to fit ourselves to receive that fulness, or labour after it, He alone can fill us; just as "of His own will begat He us with the word of truth."

We may proceed to inquire,

I. WHAT IS IT TO BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT?

II. HOW MAY THIS BLESSING BE REALIZED?

I. WHAT IS IT TO BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT?

The Spirit is the third Person of the blessed Trinity, Whose presence is everywhere, Whose power is almighty, and Whose grace and favour is life, and peace, and joy. He is purchased for the world by Him Who bore our curse that the promise of the Spirit might come on the Gentiles. He was imparted to the Patriarchs, as the Author of their faith; and to the Jewish church, as the Lord and Giver of spiritual life. But the Christian dispensation is emphatically the dispensation of the Spirit. He now carries on the aggressive war by which the world is to be saved; and dwells in the Church as the Source of light, and life, and love. He selects and fits converted men to be His ministers; He is present in His appointed ordinances to bless and to save; He converts men to God; dwells in believers as His hallowed temple; and perfects the work of their sanctification and meetness for heaven.

Now we are to be *filled* with the Spirit, in His influence, fruits, power, and consolation.

The subject presents two aspects: first, that the Holy Spirit takes hold upon our own minds, and instructs, strengthens, elevates, and sanctifies them to God; and secondly, that He imparts to us what is apart from and above our own powers, the fulness of Christian life and grace.

1. This includes, in the first place, the having *the whole soul brought under His enlightening and regulating influences;—His influence upon every faculty and power, every passion and affection of our nature.*

To be *filled* with the Spirit must imply that every faculty is influenced by Him.

The *understanding* is the direct means of access to the mind; and as moral effects are only produced by the Spirit through the employment of truth, the eyes of the understanding must first be enlightened, that we may know what is the hope of His calling. His first work is to convince of sin; and that conviction produces apprehension, fear, sorrow, prayer, and the fruits of repentance; but His teaching does not cease with the convictions of our penitent state, or the joys of our pardoned state. The believer needs perpetual instruction, because of his natural inaptitude to receive spiritual truth, and because of the deceivableness of unrighteousness, and the spiritual deceptions of the great adversary. No man may safely lean to his own understanding. The word of revelation is committed to writing that it may be a constant instructer; and we must habitually repair to it as to our certain oracle. We are not to expect the revelation of new truths; there is no need of it: that is reserved for the world of light where knowledge is attended with no temptation or danger. All that is now necessary is here revealed; but, as it is not discerned by the natural man at all, so neither can it be discerned by the converted man, except in the measure in which he is taught of God. There may be, by the diligent use of our natural faculties, a discernment of truth, dry, unimpressive, unsaving; but the vital light which reaches the conscience and the affections, is only to be obtained by Divine teaching and holy influences. There were two acts of

our Lord in enlightening His disciples. He "opened the Scriptures" at one time, doubtless applying the ancient predictions to Himself, and alleging that He was the very Christ; and at another time, He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures; doubtless then giving them a spiritual discernment, a spiritual relish for and apprehension of the saving truth,—a vitalizing light which affected and drew their hearts to Himself.

God has opened the eyes of our understanding; He has shown us the hope of our calling; but we have not discerned the fulness of truth. Like Newton we walk along the shore, and find precious things which gladden our hearts; but there lies before us a wide ocean of undiscovered truth. We have found the vein of silver; but we have not worked out the riches of the mine. We have learnt the elementary truths of the grand science of salvation; but we have yet to go on to perfection. There is a fulness in the Scriptures which is absolutely inexhaustible by finite minds; and is only comprehended by the Infinite Mind of the Author. He is the Revealer of Truth. It is His to open the eyes of our understanding; to strengthen our spiritual vision, so that we may see all things clearly; to show us the connection of one truth with another; and to enlarge our minds to receive that truth which sanctifies only in proportion as it is received by the humble, believing soul.

But let us not, my brethren, imagine that we shall be taught of God by visions and revelations, or by any extraordinary means. God may adopt what instruments He

pleases; but He has only *pledged* Himself to bless the ordinary means of instruction. We have no right to expect special instruction where ordinary means are sufficient; nor have we any right to pray for such extraordinary interpositions. He will bless our diligent labours. Then shall we find wisdom when we dig for it as for hid treasures. We must seek *wisdom*, and not pursue novelties, speculations, matters of curiosity, things not needful to be known. Foolish questions, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law,—are unprofitable and vain; and we too often find that men whose whole energies are spent in such unpractical pursuits, things not promotive of holiness, are eventually given up to the curse of empty speculation and a contentious spirit,—which soon eats out all vital religion. "If any man consent not to wholesome words,—he is proud, knowing nothing." (1 Tim. vi. 3, 4.)

But if we are seeking knowledge in order to practice, and desire it for the promotion of our holiness and usefulness, we shall be filled with "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God," or for the acknowledgment of God. There is a secret teaching of the Holy Ghost which comes partly by the heart, and partly by the mind: and the state of the affections always regulates our spiritual discernment. Hence the teaching of the Holy Ghost is described as an *unction* of the Holy One, an anointing—a visitation upon the heart as well as the understanding. This clears away much mist of prejudice and passion. And then He strengthens the power of perception; and as light is submissively sought,

and faithfully improved, He increases the measure of light, and thus He fills the understanding. The one is like the operation upon the eye whereby the cataract is removed; the other is like the dawn of the morning, which shines more and more unto the perfect day. Such teaching will not prevent infirmity of judgment, or the admission of erroneous opinions; but it will exclude all errors inconsistent with the possession of true religion, and fellowship with God.

"Be filled," therefore, "with the Spirit." Admit the light of truth into your understanding; bow with absolute submission to Divine teaching. Employ all the means for increasing your knowledge of Divine things: read, meditate, attend the most instructive and spiritual ministry; but above all open your hearts to the Spirit of Truth; let Him dart His light, His vital beams, into your whole soul. Some Christians seem to eschew knowledge, and seem to think that the dogma of a fallen church, is safe, and true,—that ignorance is the mother of devotion and religion. They prefer social intercourse to private meditation, and public means of grace to searching the Scriptures. All their knowledge is at second-hand, for they only occasionally read, and never "*search* the Scriptures;" and the knowledge of such is sure to be scanty and superficial, for there is no appetite for it. Let them consider what the Apostle has so frequently insisted upon, the necessity of increased spiritual knowledge, by making it the primary request in all his prayers for the Churches of Ephesus, Philippi, and Colosse. Knowledge is the food of faith; and if we would

be filled with the Spirit, we must seek to have our understandings filled with His light.

The *affections* must also be under the constant influence of the Spirit. Naturally they are estranged, tumultuous, vicious, earthly, sensual, and devilish; fixed upon earthly things, delighting in sensual pleasures, and as opposed to God as the devils themselves. The first visitations of the Spirit are to draw the affections away from the world to God; and when the soul is regenerated, their whole current is turned, and God becomes the object of the believer's love, and sin the object of his hatred. But there are still lingerings of affection after worldly things, and often a discord between the voice of the affections and the dictate of conscience. To "be filled with the Spirit" is to have all sinful affections not only subdued, but destroyed. The heart no longer departs from God; the troubled sea becomes calm as the bosom of the lake when not a ripple stirs its surface; the storm of clashing elements is subdued into calmness; the soul which before was a waste of thorns and briers is now as a field enclosed and which the Lord hath blessed;—a garden of Eden full of all pleasant things, where the voice of the Lord is heard, and man again talks with God, without fear and without restriction.

Such a blessed change is found in the *will*, which before was opposed to God—not subject to His law, neither indeed could be. It neither approved of God's designs, nor of His means of bringing man home again to Himself. Even in regenerate persons, there is a frequent starting aside,—a readiness to rebel, which brings

us into condemnation. But when a Christian is filled with the Spirit His will is made absolutely passive; or rather, it actively and cheerfully concurs with the will of God. He approves of the designs and plans alike of Providence and of grace. He chooses only what God wills, referring everything to God, bowing all his soul to Him. Especially is he distinguished by a willingness to be made entirely holy,—nay, a vehement desire to possess all holiness. He sees that this is the will of God, even his sanctification; that it is the design of the death of Christ, and of the whole Christian dispensation; that only this can make him truly, supremely, constantly happy, and fully and habitually prepared for heaven. When filled with the Spirit, he rejoices in the Lord always,—in His will in all things. Every mercy and every adversity is received with thanksgiving. His will is so completely subjected to the will of God, that "all, all is right by God ordained or done." He blesses God for all dispensations of Providence, from a full conviction that they work together for good; and in everything he giveth God thanks.

The *conscience* is blessedly regulated by the Spirit. It was fearfully disturbed by a sense of guilt and condemnation; but on believing in Christ, the testimony of the Spirit is imparted so as to give peace, arising from a sense of reconciliation and from confidence and hope. When a believer is filled with the Spirit he has the abiding testimony of his acceptance with God, a settled peace in believing. Having power over all sin, his conscience is void of offence towards God, and towards man. In

proportion to the sensibility of conscience is the joy of its testimony; and conscience becomes now increasingly sensitive. The believer has clearer light respecting sin and duty; a more full and particular acquaintance with his own heart; a more complete repose in the atonement; greater conscientiousness in matters referring to his closest walk with God;—so that to have the conscience filled with the light and power and comfort of the Holy Spirit, is to have a little heaven in the soul. God dwells in this innermost of the sanctuary; and like heaven itself, "there is no night there." He who is filled with the Spirit sees plainly that he needs the constant application of atoning blood by faith; for he still comes short of the demands of the law of God; but he feels that he *is* every moment saved by faith in Christ; so that his conscience no longer condemns him.

To be filled with the Spirit implies,

2. *To enjoy a maturity and perfection of Christian graces.*

It is a sickly spiritual appetite that is always craving for comfort. Joy is a great means of holiness; and cannot be separted from it; but holiness itself consists in love,—humble, obedient love. The great design of the indwelling Spirit is to form in us the Divine nature. That image of God, anew created in us, is "in righteousness and true holiness." It is all comprised in a pure, perfect, practical love of holiness; a love of God which produces love to man; a love which is not a mere sentiment, or a passion, but a principle; which influences every portion of our being, is infused into all our conduct, and elevates every work and service into

an integral portion of our religion. These influences which are *comprehended* in love to God and to all mankind for His sake, are considered in their various aspects,—as referring to different duties, and as variously manifested; but all are the one undivided "fruit" of the Spirit, ever present in the heart of the regenerate, but in various degrees of maturity and perfection. (Gal. v. 22.) The fulness of the Spirit must imply the maturity of these graces,—the destruction of their opposites, and the perfecting of holiness in the fear of God. Anger is destroyed by meekness, levity by holy mourning, pride by humility, the love of the world by the love of God. The seeds of all these graces were implanted in our regeneration; their growth is promoted by the use of the means of grace, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ; but when we are filled with the Spirit, we are filled with the perfect fruits of righteousness. There is first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. The babe is a perfect man in miniature; but he is capable of growth, and increase and perfection. "And this we wish, even your perfection."

To be filled with the Spirit is not therefore, to be made to excel in some particular grace. This was the virtue of the heathens; all other virtues were starved and destroyed, in order to feed some one. We feel a continual propensity to give prominence to some grace or duty, which may indeed gain us a name and distinction; but ours would then be a maimed and stunted Christianity; and we should be sure to prefer the line of duty, or the class of graces, most suitable to our constitutional

bias; that which involved the least struggle and the smallest sacrifice. But when we are filled with the Holy Ghost, every grace is nourished at the same time; the maturity of one is the maturity of all; our humility will increase in the same proportion as our zeal; the love of God will destroy our covetousness; and we shall have equal respect unto all God's commandments. In this respect we shall have the mind which was also in Christ Jesus, and abound in the fruits of righteousness.

But let it not be supposed that we can attain to such a measure of holiness and Divine conformity, as to have reached the limit of possible increase. It belongs to Him alone who is Infinite, to be incapable of augmentation. Our faculties and capabilities may continually be augmented; we may be led up to higher discoveries, and strengthened to receive larger communications. This is manifest in the death-beds of many saints, who most evidently are sustained by a Divine power to receive Divine communications; for their feebleness would not otherwise have sustained the weight of glory. So in the case of St. Paul in his revelations; and with the martyrs in the abounding joy of their souls. And there can be no limits to this power of God in strengthening the souls of His servants to receive the communications of His grace. This is the purport of the Apostle's prayer (Eph. i. 18—20)—"the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe," etc. Thus are we to be filled with the Spirit, receiving a perpetual increase of all His enlightening, saving, and comforting influences.

II. And now we inquire, HOW MAY THIS BLESSING BE REALIZED?

Viewed as a privilege, we must know how to seek it; viewed as a duty we must know how to meet it.

1. *We must have a firm conviction of its necessity, possibility, and desirableness.*

This fulness of Divine influence is necessary for our entire holiness and meetness for heaven. It is thus that we learn the extent and purity of the Divine law, and the fulness of Gospel privilege. To purge out all sin, and to bring in all purity, the Spirit must dwell in us, and fill the temple with His light and grace.

This fulness is provided for us in the Gospel. Christ has purchased all grace for us; and as a token of what He would do for His Church, on the day of Pentecost they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. This was the case with Stephen, and other disciples, who were filled with faith, and with the Holy Ghost. This is the peculiar glory of our dispensation. The patriarchs and Jews received the Spirit; but His fulness was reserved for the Christian dispensation; and now He is poured out, and comes upon the Church, and into the hearts of believers like a mighty wind.

And surely none can doubt the desirableness of such a blessing. This *is* bliss, to have the Spirit of holiness, of truth, and love, to dwell in our hearts; to have the indwelling of the Comforter; and, in one word, to know, love, and enjoy God.

But do we really so believe it possible as to seek it?—desirable, that we would do nothing that shall grieve such

a Guest? Have we no secret fear of being made holy? no reluctance in parting with the idols of our chambers of imagery? no fear lest we shall not find our full recompense in the enjoyment of God for our sacrifices of worldly pleasure? If we are fully convinced and resolved, let us say with David, "*One thing* have I desired of the Lord."

2. *We must be faithful to every measure of Divine influence in all practical holiness.*

The order of the covenant of grace is to bestow in proportion to man's faithfulness. The most exalted saint in glory once only received the feeble dawning of Divine light and grace. We must follow the *light* which clearly distinguishes sin from holiness; which reveals our corruptions, and shows the willingness of God to cleanse us from all sin. We must listen when called away from our worldly-mindedness as readily as when called to receive increased consolations. If invited to prayer, we must retire; and if urged to pursue with greater eagerness after Christian holiness, we must willingly yield, and "follow on to know the Lord." There are often impressions and impulses of the Spirit which we ought faithfully to regard. These will be distinguished by a peculiar light and warmth only Divine; they will generally be opposed to our natural bias; and they will always directly lead us to holiness of life. God often thus teaches us to profit by pointing us to duties which will not only profit our own souls, but be of great advantage to others.

God often imparts measures of grace in the sense of

power, to which especially we must be faithful. You feel able to take up a cross, and yet you do not; you know that if you were to put forth the power you possess, you could conquer some corrupt inclination; you have a burning desire to speak to some one respecting his soul, and often you have felt quite unable to do it; *now* you are conscious it would be easy; yet in these or similar cases, you delay; you let that power remain dormant; you do not use the faith you have;—how can you expect to be filled with the Spirit?

Again. There are times of special visitation of the Spirit upon the Church; gusts, breezes, showers, light, warmth, which cannot be commanded, which refresh, quicken, and more fully save, if improved; and which devolve great responsibility upon the Church. These are times for great improvement, for humiliation, prayer, exertion. These are times when we ought to spread our sails to catch the full gale. If such opportunities pass unimproved, they may not soon again occur; and if we be faithful to what is given in a Revival, the tone of our piety may be improved for life, and we may become pillars in the Church of God.

Three things appear to be especially important here.

1. That we carefully avoid attributing to the Spirit of God that which is not, cannot be, of His implanting or sanction. All error, imperfection, disorder, evil—whatever is not like Himself, holy and happy, and directly promotive of the Divine glory and of human happiness,—is not of God. Because in the main we are taught and influenced by the Spirit of God, we must not arrogate

His sanction of all we think, and say, and do, but remember the earthen vessels—the human instrument —flavouring their contents with earthliness.

2. That we be careful to give Him alone the honour and glory of whatever existing in us, or accomplished by us, is wise, holy, or strong. He has given us the desire; the power is imparted by Him; and the whole success is of Him. Let us distinctly avow and practically illustrate our conviction that all the good done upon earth is Divine.

3. That we never doubt His power and goodness, or limit the Holy One of Israel. He has the right to use what instruments He pleases. He is not bound by any rule that we may propose to Him; and He will fulfil the word which He has spoken unto His servants.

Lastly, *We must apply to Him by simple faith alone, in earnest prayer.*

He does not impart the Holy Ghost as the merit of our services, or as the desert of our faithfulness. All is of grace, and of grace alone. For these blessings He will be inquired of in fervent importunate prayer. Prayer is the language of dependence and humility: it has no reason but want,—no warrant but the promises. The power to plead with God is the gift of this benignant Spirit. But the agony of desire may be strong, when the degree of faith is weak. The honour is put upon *our faith*, because this is the abnegation of self-righteousness and self-sufficiency, and the acknowledgment of the sufficiency of the atonement of Christ to procure for us the fulness of the Spirit. And the blessed Spirit delights to put

honour upon the work of Christ; and the more absolutely, simply, and fully we can trust the blood of Christ, the richer will be the measures of grace and holiness in which He will impart Himself to us.

Come, then, my dear brethren, fellow-heirs of the grace of life, we have an introduction into the presence of God, in our justification; we have an Advocate with the Father; golden promises are held out to us: let us lay hold upon them; let us claim the fulness of blessing, the perpetual indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Cast out the buyers and sellers; overturn the tables of the money-changers; break in pieces every idol; throw wide open the gates of the temple; and the Divine Inhabitant shall enter. Conscience shall become High Priest before the Lord. Faith shall present the sacrifice. Hope shall lift up her eyes and hands to heaven in worship. Love shall pour upon the altar her hallowed incense. Every affection and thought shall bow down and do homage before the Lord of Hosts;—and then indeed shall be written upon the door-posts—"Holiness unto the Lord."

SERMON VIII.—THE DELAY OF CONVERSION.

"And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."—Acts xxiv. 25.

ST. PAUL, now a prisoner, is the preacher. Felix, who was to be his judge, desired to hear him on the subject of the Christian religion,—perhaps that he might make himself better acquainted with the cause he had to judge; or to gratify his wife Drusilla, who, being a Jewess, would naturally be curious to hear from the lips of this famous convert, some account of the new religion; or to give Paul an opportunity of bribing his judge for his release; or for all these reasons. Paul took the opportunity as from God, to warn, reprove, and if possible, to save his hearers. He discoursed of "righteousness," to a judge who hoped that his prisoner would have offered money to procure his release; of justice between man and man, to an unjust judge, as likely to awaken his conscience: "of temperance," not in our present sense of that word, but of the restraint of passion and evil inclinations; and this before and to a man and woman in high station, and having the preacher in their power, who were living in open, unblushing adultery: "and

of judgment to come," of the universal judgment of the last day, when all shall stand on a common level, and receive according to their works. How admirably adapted were such topics to awaken his hearers to a conviction of their sin, and shame, and danger! And how effectual in producing those convictions which, cherished, had led them also to embrace the faith of Christ, unto salvation! "Felix trembled." The preaching of the prisoner to his judge, was, through the gracious Spirit of God, effectual in producing the deepest inward alarm. Conscience approved, and answered to the preaching of St. Paul, "by manifestation of the truth commending" himself to their "conscience in the sight of God."

How bold and faithful is his conduct! What an example to Christian ministers! But what a result! "Go thy way." The Philippian gaoler asked, under similar circumstances, "What must I do to be saved?" *He* found peace, and was filled with joy. Felix was troubled, and only needed to have concurred with the grace of God vouchsafed with His truth, to have found salvation. But he sent away the messenger. He hoped for peace by getting rid of conviction. He vainly hoped for greater outward advantages, and saw not that his salvation was the prime question to which all circumstances ought to have been made subservient. He had other opportunities, and often sent for Paul and communed with him;—but his heart was set on sin; and he delayed to follow his convictions. He appears to have died unsaved.

Of the effects of Paul's preaching on Drusilla we hear

nothing. She did not tremble. She suffered no alarms. How is this? She was a sinner; she was equally, or more guilty in her incontinence than Felix. Yet neither her guilt, nor the terrible truths she heard, produced any sensible impression on her. The fact is, she was a Jewess, and had long been familiar with these truths. A woman's conscience and shame and fears are usually more readily alarmed, than a hardened man's; but even the terrors of the day of judgment produced no effect upon her. She had quenched the truth in gross sin.

Thus truth, well known, early-received *truth*, is not sufficient for conversion, or even conviction. Nay, disregarded, perverted *knowledge* may but harden the heart. The truth may be held in unrighteousness. We may be given up to believe a lie. Abused privileges may lead God to withdraw His grace, and leave us the prey of corruption and hardness of heart. This woman, as well as Felix, is a type of a large class of persons, who have received a religious education, disregarded the truth, quenched their convictions and good desires, and delayed their conversion, until they are past feeling,—unimpressed by the most convincing, solemn, and fearful truths. How many such are hearing me this night! It is not that you do not know the truth; but you delay to give God your heart,—trifle with conviction,—postpone salvation. "Go thy way," you say to us. Your opportunities will not always last. We shall not always discourse to you of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. "How long halt ye between two opinions?"

We address you this evening on the important subject

of delaying your conversion; and shall urge our appeals to you on the three following grounds.

First, *Delays arising from* DOUBTS. These may be sincere, or false,—unavoidable at present, or wilful and the result of prejudice, or neglect of the means of conviction.

Secondly, *Delays arising from* IGNORANCE OR MISAPPREHENSION. These need instruction.

Thirdly, *Delays arising from* INDIFFERENCE. And here the main question lies; and you must be brought to feel that delays are fatal, or you will not overcome your indifference and indecision.

O that you may be induced, my dear young friends, to listen with attention and candour; and to act at once upon the convictions which so important a subject may, by the blessing of God, produce on your minds!

First. *Delays of your conversion may arise from some lingering* DOUBTS in respect to the truths of Christianity.

1. You do not wholly disbelieve, but on the contrary are convinced that much argument may be urged on behalf of Christianity. You cannot doubt, for instance, the genuineness of the sacred writings,—that they were written by the men whose names they bear. Or perhaps, you have not considered this question, but you believe that, mainly, they are authentic accounts of the events of Christianity; yet there are some points on which you do not feel quite sure, but read with some undefinable impression that perhaps this or that is not true. A haze is spread over the Scriptures, and from doubting, or the want of clear conviction of the truth of

some portions, you fail to derive full satisfaction and confidence in reference to many parts of the Bible. Any measure of doubt or unsettledness of conviction, will deprive you of the comfort and power of the Scriptures; and you will readily postpone all personal and serious application to the business of salvation. If you do not read the Bible as the word and voice of God, as the inspired, true sayings of God,—it will not command your judgment and affections,—it will not rule your faith and conscience. It will be to you an uncertain sound. Doubting will become the habit of your mind; and a wretched incredulity will produce a morbid state of your whole moral powers.

Now, we must deal faithfully with you on these matters. And I therefore beg you will inquire of your hearts, whether this state of mind does not arise from the state of your heart? Whether it is not the purity and the requirements of the Gospel which disincline you cordially and fully to receive it. If it did not proclaim humiliating doctrines respecting your spiritual condition,—your guilt, depravity, and helplessness; if it made no requirements of self-denial; if it did not require that you should be saved by the merits of Another, and proclaim the necessity of an entire change of heart,—would it not bring sufficient evidence to command your assent and belief? If it gave license to sinful gratification, and only proposed things to be believed, and did not enjoin painful duties to be performed,—could you not readily receive the Bible on the evidences of inspiration which it offers? Unbelief, of which doubting is a symptom, springs most

usually from the evil disinclinations of the heart. It is an *evil* heart of unbelief in *departing* from the living God. If you are opposed to the Bible, on account of its holy doctrines, tendency, and requirements, you will readily find occasions of doubt, and may eventually learn to reject it altogether.

I must then inquire of you, my brethren, whether you have sought after conviction of the truth and divinity of the Scriptures? Have you yielded to a spirit of doubting, without endeavouring to ascertain what and why you doubt? or have you traced the matter to its causes, and endeavoured honestly to learn, by inquiry and study, whether there were not easy and ready solutions of your difficulties? Have you sought counsel of your minister, or of a competent friend? Have you read any of the numberless works which meet and refute the strongest objections which have ever been brought against Christianity? Are you trying to *settle* your mind on a subject of infinite consequence? or do you leave it to the chances of time, when, you know not how, it may be settled, one way or the other?

Let me remind you, my dear young friends, that such a procedure is highly criminal and dangerous. If God has given to man a revelation of Himself, it is for man's guidance and welfare. He has, so to speak, gone out of His way, to make Himself thus known to us. And if His revelation have some difficulties, and we cannot be fully assured of its truth but by diligent inquiry and effort, it is only in keeping with other arrangements. Our food and other necessaries are only procured in the same

way. Medicine for our recovery from sickness otherwise fatal, is not known but by much painful research. And it is obviously part of our probationary trial, that we should have to inquire and search for truth, and should only be able to find it while we pursue it with certain moral qualifications and dispositions. To be indifferent, and negligent of truth and of a Volume which offers so many presumptive arguments in its favour from the fact of its general reception, the sufferings of its adherents, and the effects it ever produces on their lives,—is obviously a wrong state of heart; and your delay is culpable and inexcusable when the subject involves your duty to God, your fellow-creatures, and your own soul.

You are not at liberty to be indifferent. Your delay is criminal. Were you eager to do the will of God, you would find it easy to settle it in your own mind whether Christianity be true. You cannot prove it to be false. It has never been so proved. It offers abundant and convincing evidence of its Divine original. Read the Scriptures, and you will soon feel that there is a majesty in them that pertains to no other volume. Read the Bible with the fact ever present to your mind, that you have sinned, and you will soon find that it can and does reveal your true character further than you could of yourself ever discover it. Read it with prayer, and you will joyfully discover that on a candid and devout mind, it impresses its own spirit; that its revelations of a Saviour make it spirit and life unto you; and that it will leave a deep and lasting conviction of its Divine origin.

2. But perhaps your doubts do not so much refer to

the authenticity of the sacred Volume, as to the orthodox construction of some of its statements. There are doctrines, usually received in the Churches, which you cannot receive as they are usually understood. Many of them are so mysterious that they appear to be contradictory to your mind; many are made of so great importance in the system of Christianity, as to be essential, fundamental truths, which you are disposed to consider rather as speculative, and not necessary to be believed, if indeed they have any place in the Bible at all. Perhaps the doctrine of the Trinity, the Incarnation of Christ, the atonement of His death, and the doctrine of the efficacious operations of the Holy Spirit, are among the truths of which you doubt. You cannot say that you could disprove them; or if you partly believe them, it is with some degree of unbelief, and you cannot assign them that place of supreme importance which is usually allotted to them.

Here, again, we perceive a fatal occasion of delay in conversion. The doctrines which you in part reject because of their mysteriousness, are not subordinate, but cardinal doctrines. They form the peculiarity of Christianity, and are its proper basis. The guilty condition of the whole world requires an atonement of infinite value; and hence the doctrine of the Divine nature of the Son of God becomes an essential part of the Christian scheme. The utter depravity of the human heart requires absolute regeneration,—a radical, universal, moral change of principles and dispositions, which, as is obvious, it is out of the power of depraved man to effect in himself by

any process of moral discipline and cure. Hence the necessity of the mission and agency of an Almighty Spirit, promised and offered to all who seek His aid. Every science has its fundamental truths; and theology, religion, has its vital and essential truths. And they are vital and essential because they are practical. They bear vitally and essentially upon the sinner's salvation. They are facts as well as doctrines; and they alone meet the facts of man's nature and condition. And they produce their practical effects upon human nature by being received into the heart by faith,—cordially and affectionately received as the remedy for man's moral state,—trusted in as the means of regeneration.

Now, we do not deny that men may sincerely doubt upon these points: but that sincerity will consist, not in rejecting them because they are mysterious, since we are obliged to receive a large amount of truth which is really mysterious, and that on merely human testimony: nor will a sincere inquirer suffer himself to reject truth because it differs from his preconceptions of what it should be, or opposes his own evil tendencies. The holiness of the Scriptures and the holy tendency of the Scriptures will not offend you, if you are sincere, but will rather induce you to wish the doctrines may be true. If you delay to embrace them only for fear you should embrace error, you will diligently search the Scriptures, for they are they that testify of Christ. You will see that a depraved heart must necessarily give a bias against the doctrines of Christianity, which are all holy in themselves, and in their tendencies; but you will expect to

find the truth, and will not rest. Above all, you will do the will of God as far as you can understand it; assured that "if any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

Brethren, I speak to you who doubt, and allege that reason for delay. But there are some things certain in your own minds. It is *certain* that God is your Maker, Owner, Lawgiver, Judge. Now, are you prompt in the duties which necessarily result from this relationship? Do you present Him the allegiance of your heart? Your worship,—your trust,—your obedience? Ought you not to love Him with all your heart and mind? Do you? If not, you are not sincere in saying that your delay is the result of *doubt.* If you serve not according to your convictions, it is *disinclination.*

It is therefore vain and wrong to say you envy those who have obtained a full conviction, a full assurance respecting the authority and doctrines of the Scriptures. You do not apply to yourselves, to practical purpose, the truths you know. You do not desire to be fully convinced. You are not ready to part with all sin, although, like Herod, you may hear gladly and do many things. It is not want of faith, but want of inclination to accept of salvation; it is not your doubts but your passions which occasion your delay. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God." You prefer, however, to charge it upon your want of conviction and of faith, rather than upon your love of vice, because that is less humiliating to your self-love. If the Gospel only required that you should bind your mind to receive the mysteries of Chris-

tianity, and required no painful duties; if the life were not to be changed, but only some matters of opinion and belief were concerned,—you would readily embrace the faith, and no longer delay to become Christians.

And after all, O beware lest these be only assumed, pretended doubts! Remember that you dare not take the horrible course of avowed unbelief. You dare not renounce your interest in Gospel truths. You know and feel that there is more certainty, assurance of safety, in devoting yourself to God, and trusting in the merits of His Son, than in the rejection of the Gospel, or even in doubting indifference to its great truths. You know that unbelief is only a region of quicksands, with ten thousand gulfs all yawning to devour. You know that there is more liberty among the righteous than you enjoy; only you dread to break your chains. Follow then the convictions which oppose self; and emerge from the night of sinful doubts, and shake yourselves from your moral sloth, and "quit yourselves like men."

Secondly. I address myself to those whose *delays arise from* IGNORANCE OR MISAPPREHENSION.

You do not understand many of those subjects which you think you ought to do before you become a decided Christian.

1. Perhaps you are not clear as to *the nature of true religion.* Some imagine it to be some mystical feeling, only reached by a long course of spiritual discipline; of seclusion, austerity, contemplation, abstraction, and supreme and exclusive devotedness to spiritual things:

whereas it belongs to the duties of active life—the cheerful hum of men,—as well as to the privacy of devotion, and the ecstasies of seraphic love. But such a notion of religion as we have described will prevent persons from pursuing it, or even choosing it. They feel such a state, if that be religion, to be unsuited to their temperament, and their position in the world, and they delay the choice and pursuit of it until age shall bring freedom from cares and temptations, and seclusion from the world shall afford opportunity for spiritual abstractions. They hope for a convenient season.

Some suppose religion to consist in externals—in ceremonial exactness, in formality of worship and exact outward obedience. They think that all that can be required is, to fear God and to keep His commandments; and putting their own construction upon the terms of religion, and applying their own standard of obedience, they rest satisfied in the hope that they, in a good measure, keep the law, and that they shall progressively improve in such exactness and obedience as shall constitute them safe, if not eminent Christians.

Few who have not seriously given themselves to the study of the Scriptures and the pursuit of a Scriptural religion, conceive justly of the nature of vital and personal Christianity. In truth, it is both inward and outward, of God and of man. It is the love of God, and the keeping His commandments from love to Him. The kingdom of God is therefore within you. It is not mere externalism—"meat and drink;" but "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

It is "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." A deep hatred of all sin; a holy mourning after God; a lively and hearty trust in the atoning blood of Christ; a sweet assurance of the love of God; a hearty and entire devotedness to His glory and service,—this is religion. For the heart to be turned to God,—converted,—made new,—filled with peace and love,—this is religion.

Now, it may be that you have not decided for God, because you have mistaken this point. You have set religion too high,—as a thing utterly incompatible with our state of sinfulness and infirmity. Or you may have set it too low, and have satisfied yourself with your moral attainments, and a measure of religious sensibility, as if that constituted a saving change.

Learn then, that conversion is a change of heart; a new birth; a renewal in the spirit of your mind; a change of disposition and temper, of principle and motive; so that you shall not be overcome by sin, but have power over it. It is accompanied by peace and joy,—a serene joy, a constant peace. It is the fruit of a Divine agency upon the heart, by which old things are passed away.

It is connected with faith in Christ as its instrumental cause, and only exists when the sinner rests upon and cleaves to Christ as his all of merit and hope. And such a faith can only be exercised by a penitent sinner who mourns over his sins as offensive to God and damning to the soul, because he only will seek and accept a remedy which excludes all merit, boasting, and self-sufficiency; and acknowledges that while he

deserves death, Christ has purchased life and salvation for all who believe in Him.

See, then, what religion is, and remember what is required for the obtaining it; for when you understand its nature, surely you need not hesitate one moment whether or not you should pursue and enjoy so happy a religion.

2. Some again, delay their full application to Christ because *they understand not the plan of salvation*,—the terms and method in which religion is to be sought. They imagine that it must be the fruit of many years' painful and laborious toil. That they may enjoy religion, they suppose they must do some great thing; and can never believe that they may simply wash and be clean. That they may be saved from the guilt and power of sin, appears to them a great thing indeed; and they cannot imagine that it is enough that they simply and heartily trust in the merit of Christ for salvation.

Such a method is too simple to be received—too good to be true; and many stay away from the gospel feast, thinking that they must be clothed honourably, and forgetting that the Master provides the guests with wedding garments.

3. But a more common occasion of delay, is *misapprehension of the doctrine of Divine grace.* That Divine influence is necessary to turn the heart from sin to God, is admitted and contended for; but, the doctrine is, in many cases, abused. We cannot, of ourselves, turn to God. His prevenient grace is absolutely necessary. If we are born again, it must be by the Spirit of God. The Father

must draw us. But this truth is perverted into a reason for delay and impenitence. This most wholesome doctrine becomes poisonous. This bridge of our return to God is broken,—and a new chaos is brought between the soul and God. The wretched plea is, "I cannot turn to God of myself. When He sees good, He will send His efficacious grace; and He will find me in His own good time. I cannot turn of myself, and I must wait His grace."

Now, it is true that repentance and faith are the gifts of God: but does it follow that your want of them are no fault of yours? You might have asked for them; and God promises that if you ask, you shall receive. They are, therefore, in a sense in your own power. You might have grace and faith, if you earnestly sought for them. Do not say, "I cannot pray aright; I cannot pray acceptably, and as I ought." I read nothing of this in the Book. If you follow and yield to Him, you shall now offer acceptable and effectual prayer. *Cry* unto Him. *Call* upon Him—ask—seek—knock. Do not dispute with God, but do His will. Whatever be mysterious in the ways of God, in the sovereignty of His grace,—this is plain, that you can pray; and that He gives blessings in answer to prayer which He would not give if we did not pray; just as He gives us food by our industrious endeavour to raise food, which would not be raised but by our labour, as a means; just as diseases are cured by medicine which would prove fatal but for that medicine. Sow your land for food, and you shall be fed. Take medicine for your health, and you shall recover.

Pray to God for grace and salvation, and you shall be saved. Salvation is within your reach if you pray; and it would be a solemn mockery to offer you salvation on these terms only, if their fulfilment were impossible.

But I would ask, is there any sinner here who may justly complain of the want of gracious influences? Look at your whole life; what repeated instances strike your wondering gratitude, wherein He has sent you gracious influences! These improved might have issued in your salvation. You can never charge Him with having withheld sufficient grace from you, until you can show that by no improvement of what you have received could you possibly have been saved. And remember, that at the same time, He who knows whereof you are made, and what has been vouchsafed to you, charges upon you the guilt of not being saved. "Ye will not come unto Me." "I called, but ye refused."

Nay, does He not at this very time, vouchsafe His grace to you? Do you not feel convinced of your own sin, and of His readiness to receive you? Do you not now feel some compunctions for your sin, and desire of salvation? To betake yourself to excuses, instead of immediately flying to Christ,—to expect that sovereign grace should overpower your reluctance, and swiftly carry you off to heaven,—is to transfer your duty to God, and to say that the chief business of your whole life is no concern of yours, that you may live tranquilly in guilt, and leave the result with God. Will you act on such a principle in ordinary matters?

"Commissioned by His sovereign will,
Poison shall cure, and balm shall kill."

Will you therefore consent to drink a cup of poison? Will you plunge into the tempestuous waves, because you cannot save yourself, though God can deliver you from going down into the pit? You surely do not suppose that the moment of your conversion is so determined by God, that sin will not retard it, nor prayer and penitence promote it? If you had not received the grace of God in vain, you had long since been made penitent. Insult not God by laying the blame of your indecision and impenitency upon Him, when He is constantly furnishing you with opportunity to return to Him, and with such influences, that, if you improve them, they shall assuredly issue in your salvation.

On the other hand, let no one delay through any fear or despondency. "Turn you at my reproof," saith Jehovah, and "I will pour out My Spirit unto you." There is an utter impossibility of saving yourselves by your own power: "but He giveth more grace." "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God."

Thirdly. *Delays of conversion may arise from* INDIFFERENCE.

This is the real cause, in most cases. A fatal slumber possesses mankind. To awake them is to offend them; and yet if they sleep on, they perish. But that we ourselves are all affected with the evil, we should think it impossible that any creatures could be found so indifferent to such mighty interests. Were we to suppose a

world of rebels to whom offers of pardon and restoration were made, procured at the price of the death of the king's own son,—we should marvel that all did not at once, with the utmost eagerness, accept the offer of forgiveness and peace. We are the indifferent parties, and this is our condemnation. I speak to many who must confess that the two former classes of occasions of delay do not affect them. They believe the Bible, and contend for the orthodox faith. They understand the way of salvation, and the necessity of Divine influence. But they are indifferent, against their convictions; they delay and postpone a decision which they know is necessary, and which they hope will, some day, be successful.

1. Indifference to *the obligations of religion.* You can see and acknowledge the mutual claims of your fellow-creatures; but you do not see or regard the claims of God. Ought He not to be honoured as the Supreme, by your supreme love? Ought He not to be feared Who is omniscient and almighty, holy, just, and true? Has He not claims Who has made you capable of His service, and of the highest bliss that creatures can know and enjoy, in His favour and holy image? Ought you not to surrender yourselves to Him Who has had long patience with you, has seldom resented your insults, or punished your faults, and has loaded you with loving-kindnesses? But the infinite emphasis is in what He has done to redeem you from eternal death. What motive can be compared with this? It transcends all others. Christ hath redeemed you with His own blood. Here is obligation

infinite: pardon for infinite offence, through blood Divine. I say nothing on the obligations arising from the fact that religion is your proper end,—the only true method of securing the end of your being; nor of the interest felt by the unerring inhabitants of heaven, and the fallen sons of light, in your welfare; nor of the immense, the infinite importance of your decision, as affecting so many points in the government of God, and so many interests;—I call upon you to weigh well the obligations laid upon you by the Lord and Master of your all and mine, and to make your choice wisely. You ought to be religious. You are bound to serve God. There is no obligation so simple, so severe, so entire. To delay on any grounds of doubt whether you ought to give yourself to God, is a crime indeed. You ought to hearken to God, rather than to the sluggish unwillingness of your own nature. "If the Lord be God, follow Him."

2. Indifference to *the pleasures of religion*, occasions delay. You cannot doubt that religion gives pleasure. You see Christians happy; and often think well of the blessedness the righteous speak of. But you prefer sensuous enjoyment: the pleasures of the world—of worldly companions and pursuits, of music, of literature, of fashion, of gay indifference to these higher subjects. That which ministers to present enjoyment has commanding influence with you. The joys of religion are too spiritual for you properly to conceive of and duly to estimate. They must be possessed to be valued. And you imagine, not only that they fail of satisfaction, but that it is doubtful whether they will repay you for the

sacrifice of so many sensible, present pleasures which you hold dear, and for the labour and pains which are needful to their being secured. So long as youth, and health, and friends, and wealth, and pleasures are attainable, and are enjoyed by you, you see not any need of the pleasures of religion, and these are therefore viewed with indifference and treated with neglect. Had Felix known how much more rational, spiritual, pure, satisfactory was the enjoyment of St. Paul, his prisoner, than were his own sensual, unlawful pursuits and pleasures, he would gladly have exchanged conditions with St. Paul, if that might have been accepted as the price of such joy and hope.

My dear friends,—you greatly mistake, and grievously dishonour religion, when you disregard its pleasures. They spring from the smile of God, the approval of conscience, the regulation of the passions, the delight of Divine and Christian communion, the graces of resignation, patience, gentleness, goodness, fortitude, and universal love, and the purifying hope and earnest of heaven. What can you compare with these? Do you weigh against them, your own pleasures? What pleasures have you which are rational and innocent,—noble and satisfying, which we cannot enjoy? Do you delight in literature, and science, and philosophy? So can we. Can you study the works of God, and pursue deep investigations until you glow with the raptures of discovery? So can we. Can you enjoy the pure pleasures of virtuous friendship? So can we. Do you delight in music, painting, sculpture, arts, taste? So can we. You

shall lose none of these pleasures by becoming a decided Christian. They shall all yield a pure and more intense enjoyment, when you see God in all; when you feel true gratitude to Him as your Father for opening up to you such scenes of wonder and joy; when you can look upon all that is earthly as the shadow of good things to come,—things more pure, more wonderful, more sublime; when you can tread this earth as the grand vestibule to the glorious palace which is to be your everlasting dwelling-place. Be not indifferent to the pleasures of religion. You lose none that are worth retaining. All shall be elevated and spiritualized. The very seeking religion shall afford you more joy than the possession of your present pleasures: the mystic joys of penitence exceeding the maddening joys of mirth; and the duty of prayer furnishing more joy of heart, than your dearest earthly friendship. Say not then, "Go thy way." Now resolve in the strength of Divine grace to be wholly the Lord's. Set out upon the path to Christ and heaven; the ways of pleasantness and the paths of peace.

3. Indifference to *the necessity of personal conversion*, is another occasion of delay. We need not now *argue* the necessity of this change of heart. We will assume it. You have not so read the Scriptures, or heard the Gospel preached, as not to know that you are guilty and depraved, and that entire regeneration is absolutely necessary to your entering into the kingdom of heaven. It is *needful.* Ye must be born again. Even though, like Nicodemus, you have all the natural and conventional virtues that

ever covered and adorned enmity against God, and although you like him have religious knowledge, and sincerity, and a regard for religion, and espouse it as a cause,—yet Christ says to you as to him, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye must be born again." The fact is indisputable. But you do not *feel* it. Your heart is strangely indifferent to it. You delay to do what you admit is indispensable. You consider it a dire necessity, and you recoil from the contemplation of it. You really wish there were no necessity for it,—that heaven could be reached without such a painful sacrifice of sin,—such a change of heart. But since it must be, you postpone it—you deliberately delay it. You blame the insolvent who neglects the timely and saving examination of his affairs; and you delay to examine your own state. You are shocked at the procrastination of the man who has to be tried next week for his life, and who cannot be persuaded to make any preparation; and unprepared to meet your God, you know not that to-morrow's sun shall dawn upon yourselves.

Let me entreat each one of you to play the man. Sit down and calmly consider the most important questions which can engage your minds. What am I? Where am I? Whither am I going?—Act out your own calm, deep convictions. If the Lord be God, follow Him. If religion be true, embrace it. If it be important, delay no longer. If righteousness and temperance will not move you, remember I preach to you the judgment to come.

SERMON IX.—RELIGIOUS DECLENSION: ITS CAUSES AND EFFECTS.

"Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."—Galatians v. 7—9.

THE Galatians were early perverted from the simple doctrines of the Gospel, by Judaizing teachers who taught the necessity of circumcision and submission to the Mosaic law. St. Paul therefore proves in this epistle that believers are freed from the obligation of that law, and that they who departed from the truth which God had honoured in their conversion, would thereby lose all the benefits to which believers are entitled under the Gospel dispensation. He therefore exhorts them to stand fast in their liberty from "the yoke" of Jewish rites and ceremonies; and to depend on Christ alone for salvation; since if they were circumcised, and put themselves under the law, they became debtors to perform every part of it, on pain of its curse; and they forfeited all the blessings of Christianity, wherein no ceremonies avail anything, but faith which worketh by love. He then addresses them in the bold language of the text: "Ye did run well," at the beginning of your Christian course; who hath hindered, or retarded you? or (marg.)

"who did drive you back?" or, as Bloomfield, "Ye were running well; who hath impeded you by cutting trenches in your way, and thus stopping your progress?" It is not a simple interrogative, but is expressive of grief and indignation—as in Gal. iii. 1. "This persuasion," this facility of belief, whereby ye take up the notion of the necessity of mixing Judaism with Christianity, "cometh not of him that calleth you." Early expositors refer this to *God* or *Christ;* latter ones to *St. Paul*, who called them to liberty from the law. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." There is awful danger in your yielding to doctrinal errors. It is an adage (see 1 Cor. v. 6), "the yielding on those points will soon corrupt the whole of your Christian principles."

Such is the warning of the Apostle to a declining Church; and such his efforts to reclaim it. They will justify our solemn and affectionate warning to all those who once ran well, and now are hindered.

We call your attention,

I. To the CAUSES; and

II. To the EFFECTS of religious declension.

I. There is difficulty in distinguishing in many cases between the *causes* and the *effects* of religious declension. In some that is a cause which in others is an effect. Constitution and circumstances differ. And often the effects of religious declension become in turn the causes of a more grievous departure. We refer to inward declension, and not to open backsliding; and this distinction must be kept in mind.

The causes are not first of all and potentially to be sought *in external circumstances.* A religious professor has immensely enlarged his worldly business and increased in wealth. This may and *will* increase his temptations to ease and self-indulgence; but it does not necessitate his spiritual declension. Many have stood in such slippery places; and *he* might have brought more glory to God, and have himself increased in holiness, had he been watchful and faithful. But his mind has become earthly and vain; and his circumstances have accelerated his downward progress. Neither is adversity, *per se*, the cause, although it may become the *occasion* of backsliding, or of a more grievous departure from God. The causes are to be sought for in the principles of the heart; in the habitual indulgence of known evil.

It is obvious from all the reprehensions and representations of Scripture, that such declension is *voluntary* and *criminal.* False teachers *need not* be followed; erroneous doctrines may be rejected; evil companions may be shunned; prosperity and adversity may be improved; temptations may be resisted; and grace may reign and triumph.

Let us see whether the following may not be among the principal causes.

1. *Believers not pressing after entire holiness.*

That a higher state of holiness is desirable and possible, who can doubt? and whatever controversy may exist in reference to Christian perfection, all acknowledge the necessity of continual progression,—and that there are no limits assigned in Scripture to our own divine con-

formity. When we rest we retrograde. And yet how many *rest in justification?* Of the fact of their justification and acceptance at some past period, they can have no doubt, attested as it was by the witness of the Spirit, with all His gracious fruits; and corroborated by that change of heart and of life of which they were made blessedly conscious. To this all-important period and transaction they often refer; but it is to obtain from the recollections on which they feed a dull and vague hope that all is yet well with them,—as if past justification could avail against present condemnation. They forget that we are now accepted or not, according to our penitent faith. "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, ... shall he live?" "Does not talking, without proper caution, of a justified or sanctified state, tend to mislead men; almost naturally leading them to trust in what was done in one moment? Whereas we are every moment pleasing or displeasing to God, according to our works, according to the whole of our present inward tempers and outward behaviour." This is not duly observed; and the result is unwatchfulness and habitual unfaithfulness. My brethren, examine your own hearts. See whether you have thus rested; recounting the mercies of the Lord in bringing you out of darkness into His marvellous light, but trusting in this great achievement of grace. You have been brought out of Egypt, and through the Red Sea; but unless you press on through the wilderness, you may yet perish. Your justification was not to be a *substitute* for sanctification; but a *means* to it. You were made the child of

God, that you might become evangelically entitled to all the blessings of the covenant of peace.

Many make *the piety of others* their standard in religion. They look upon ministers or officers in the Church, or men of influence and long standing, and observing many of their defects, deem them or such, consistent with true piety both in themselves and others. Ignorant of the true character of those they are thus observing, as to peculiarity of constitution and so forth, they know not wherein they sin ignorantly, or whether they have wholly lost the savour of godliness; while they nevertheless plead such infirmity or sin in mitigation of their own guilt. But, my brethren, let us remember that there is no merely human example binding upon us as a rule; nor any exceptions in the character and conduct of others that will mitigate our own guilt. "What is that to thee? follow thou Me." "Let every man prove *his own* work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden."

Christ did not say "Learn of them," but "Learn of Me."

This not pressing after all holiness is the secret cause of declension in every instance; for if men saw their own deep corruption, and believed the doctrine of Christian holiness, and pressed earnestly after all the religion they see to be attainable, they could not decline from God. Hear, my brethren, "the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children." It is from the pen of one who had learnt by bitter experience the necessity

of watchfulness, diligence, and faithful adherence to Christ. "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith, ... giving all diligence, add to your faith," etc. (2 Peter i. 1, 5.)

2. *Unwatchfulness, presumption, and inactivity.*

Nothing is plainer, or more obviously essential than watchfulness. Even sincere and honest purposers, and a heart which really loves the Saviour, may easily be surprised into sin. Such was the case with Peter. He was warned when our Lord said, 'The Spirit truly is willing; I know thy purposes; but the flesh is weak; nature is frail; and there are a thousand circumstances of temptation, through which evil may gain access, and thou mayest fall.' The number, vigilance, subtlety, malignity, power, and perseverance of our enemies,—with the perpetual change of our circumstances,—all render it necessary for us to be all eye, all ear, all feeling.

Allied to this danger, and indeed the great cause of unwatchfulness, is presumption. We trust in ourselves, rather than in the living God. We think we can surely brave *this* temptation; we fancy ourselves secure, when we are really in the greatest danger from our feeling of false security. We thus venture on forbidden ground; or at the least, make the experiment *how near* we can approach the confines of what is unlawful, and yet retain our integrity. We see not that here is proof of our lusting after the sin; that we are *pleased* with the temptation; and therefore much in its power. Habitual unwatchfulness is often punished by some striking instance of presumption; for when men cease habitually to regard God, and

when they begin to trust to their own sufficiency, it is a righteous judgment to allow such to fall into some open disgrace, by which their pride is wounded, a lesson of habitual watchfulness is set home upon the heart, and they learn to go softly all their days.

These two causes will generally be allied with spiritual inactivity; for when men know not their danger, why should they act as watchmen, or as soldiers armed for the battle? There will then be little stirring up of themselves to take hold of God; little of the spiritual warfare against flesh and blood—the appetites and passions of nature—or against principalities and powers, and spiritual warfare in high places. The grace of God cannot, however, be maintained in vigorous life, without energetic action. Without conflict with insidious or open foes, our faith will soon degenerate into pusillanimity. We must add to our faith, courage. If our spiritual conflicts are few, we must render the more outward service to God's cause: for the not doing good is one of the most certain means of declining from God.

These remarks are illustrated and confirmed by the history of early Christians, and the first Methodists, both of whom were engaged in a spiritual warfare against the world, and were as laborious in doing good, as they were patient in bearing ill. Our own experience may become our teacher. When we were ardently panting after God, we were humble, watchful, laborious: and as soon as we ceased thus to walk in the works prepared to exercise our grace, how speedily did we decline from God!

3. *Trifling with conscience*, is another great cause of

religious declension. The prime office of conscience is to accuse or excuse; to pronounce upon the moral qualities of every action, by comparing it with the great rule of holy living, the will of God.

Like the senses which apprise of danger, and are the seat of bodily pain and enjoyment, the conscience appears to be a sort of moral sense spread over the whole soul, to warn us of evil tendencies, and to lead us in the path of safety and peace. In conversion it is savingly enlightened and rectified; and if we be faithful to its monitions, it will become exquisitely susceptible of impression, and its approval will be the source of the highest joy next to the favour of God. Like instinct to the inferior animals, it is to us in the stead of experience; and if we faithfully follow its dictates even where we have had no experience of the results of such a course of conduct, conscience thus enlightened and made sensible will direct us aright. And even when men have been unfaithful to its warnings, and disobedient to its suggestions, we find that those warnings and dictates are renewed again and again. That gracious Spirit whose work and delight it is to lead His people into the land of uprightness, has long patience, and does not depart upon the first, or many, provocations. He offers many checks to backsliders; and must be grievously "*vexed*" before He will "turn to be their enemy." But if His strivings are in vain; if men are told of their sin, and of its exceeding sinfulness and grievous consequences, and yet will not abandon it,—their religion must necessarily decline. When the first impulses are disre-

garded, and conscience is trifled with, and light is quenched, the Christian has already incurred the loss of their peace and power. "The mystery of faith" can only be held "in a pure conscience."

4. *Political controversy* is another bane of piety. Nothing more certainly engenders strife, and all the passions most opposed to the temper of Christianity. It is proverbial that religious dissension and political feuds are most acrimonious. Neither side in such party-debates, is free from danger; for men cannot endure to have their measures opposed, nor in a great trial of strength, to be worsted, without "bitter envying and strife in their hearts;" and this often leads them to "lie against the truth." This wisdom descends not from above, but comes from beneath. "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." Without reference to parties, and without being suspected by his people of having any particular or partial allusion, especially when he explicitly disowns it, surely a minister may, and ought to, warn his people against so common, so great, so dangerous an evil. With all candour and making all due allowance for infirmity of judgment and for the strength of passions and prejudices, not to say interests, linked into this service, we should carefully regard so important a part of human life, and of *public* life, and weigh it in the balances of the sanctuary. Political duties do devolve on Christians as citizens; and it is in their power to perform them creditably to the Gospel. Let a man deliberately weigh and settle his principles; and in doing this, he must as a Christian take the

Scriptures for his guide, so far as they furnish principles, precepts, and precedents suited to the case. Let him then content himself with calmly acting upon them. He will do wisely to avoid the arena of political controversy, and not attempt to win others to embrace his views. It is not the field of Christian energy and enterprise. Damage to his Christian temper and principles he may sustain, but benefit he cannot secure. Who expects that eagerness in political controversy and strife shall promote the spirit of prayer, or of brotherly love, or of humility, or of zeal for the cause of Christ unconnected with all party-purposes and ends? What pursuits so deeply lay hold on human nature? What else so absorbing? or what so unprofitable? We have yet to see the instance of its promoting individual piety, or social comfort, or brotherly love; but we can easily point to the friends and brethren who, by their feuds, have been irreconcilably alienated; to the families which have each become "a house divided against itself;" to the churches which, once like "a field which the Lord hath blessed," have become a desolation; and to the individuals, by thousands, who once were eminent Christians, but have now been shorn of their strength, and become weak as other men. If the world were Christianized, politics might be comparatively harmless; but while all parties in turn adopt a crooked policy, and unrighteous methods of securing their own ends, or defeating the purposes of their opponents, to enter the turbid stream is to become contaminated, to engage in the strife is certainly to be wounded, and possibly to be slain. "Can a

man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?"

Never did the Church more need the warning voice of ministerial faithfulness, than at present. At a period when the greatest changes are occurring in society;—when every measure is fraught with the most important immediate consequences; and when from the complicated machinery of society, and the intermingled relations of all countries and of all subjects, no one can estimate the remote consequences of any present changes;—and when the power for good or evil is lodged in the hands of multitudes who have not equal means of studying and comprehending such vast subjects, and who are prone to be swayed more by passion and interest than by an enlightened judgment and real patriotism, politics become a stormy sea, and every vessel is jeoparded. Is the danger to Christians lessened by any of the recent changes in the state of society? Does the commonness of an evil lessen its power? or shall we deliberately risk our religion, because others rush into danger? And shall we learn nothing by the fall of men whose departure from God may be traced to their eager pursuit of political controversy? nor by our own experience of the evils of being thus absorbed, to the neglect of the means of grace, to the damage of our brotherly love, and to the loss of our own spiritual enjoyment? My brethren, let us rather seek the "wisdom that is from above," which is "first pure, then peaceable." (James iii. 17.)

5. *An eager pursuit of the world.* But the difficulty will be urged, How are we to determine when the world

is unduly pursued? And you will remind us that some men can transact business with so much more of system and calmness, and indifference to the results, than others. And that many eminent Christians have been deeply engaged in conducting an extensive and complicated business. Admitted: but in these moral questions, our business is, by the truth, by faithful exhibition of facts, by appeal to experience, to furnish light by which individual conscience may be directed in forming its decisions. It is not another's but your own case with which you have to do. It is when the pursuit or enjoyment of the world absorbs us, and diminishes our first love; abridges our zealous labours; and, in a great degree, separates us from the Church, that we see in it the cause of religious declension. Look at facts. See those who were once zealous, diligent, affectionate, devoted to Christ and His interests,—now settled in life, losing all heart for religion, and devoted to the ignoble purpose of *saving money*. Take the estimate of *the world* on this matter, and he who thus doeth well to *himself*—provided he be honest—is free from blame, and men praise him for his diligence and discretion. Take the *Scripture* estimate, and it is "covetousness which is idolatry." It is a sin against which we are solemnly warned. Envied of men, such a man is abhorred of God. Two striking illustrations of the folly, wickedness, and punishment of those who live only to possess and enjoy the good things of this life, are given in St. Luke's Gospel, (chaps. xii., xvi).

And that which renders this evil and danger the greater, is the commonness of the sin; the world ap-

plauds us; and the sin is baptized by such Christian names as almost effectually to hide its enormity. "The reproach of mankind may assist the remonstrances of conscience, in carrying conviction to our bosoms; but of that for which the world acquits us, we shall be exceedingly disposed to acquit ourselves."

This is almost the only sin which may be habitually indulged whilst a profession of religion is supported. (See Fuller on "Religious Declension.") If men cannot figure away in the world in the height of its fashions and sin; yet they may love the world supremely, and be unreproved. Lot chose the vale of Sodom, and the half-tribe of Manasseh chose "this side of Jordan;" and what were the results?—How often the same spirit is betrayed in choosing our own, or our children's lot. Temporal advantages have outweighed spiritual disadvantages. The love of the world leads others to make haste to be rich: and hence unwarrantable speculations and bold adventures, to the frequent loss of not their own only, but also of other people's wealth and comfort.

Such a passion leads to worldly conformity; and the pride of life,—the desire to make an appearance—to ape our superiors, and to excel our equals—has not only ruined the fortunes of thousands, but their reputation, their principles, their souls. We need not affect singularity; but this is harmless in comparison with the chase after fashion, and the love of dress and appearance. "Be not conformed to this world."

Finally, we notice as a cause of religious declension,

6. *The abuse or neglect of the means of grace.* The

abuse to which we refer is the resting in them, usually accompanied by their most rigid observance, and their multiplication, as if the means of religion constituted religion itself. This is but a modification of self-righteousness, the principle evinced by these perverted Galatians, but which is comparatively rare. The real danger in our day, and among ourselves, is the neglect of the means of grace. There may yet be the regular and punctual attendance upon the public means; for an awful declension must have occurred before a man can forsake the public ordinances. But men may rest in these. They regard public opinion; they desire religious knowledge; they find intellectual pleasure in them; they thereby satisfy the demands of conscience, and the expectations of the Church; and they find a soothing influence upon their own minds in such public ordinances; all or any of which reasons may induce an attendance upon the services of God's house. But the more searching means are irregularly attended; and private prayer and self-examination almost entirely neglected. No one needs to be instructed as to the natural and necessary result. If means of grace be attended as a kind of commutation, we lose the grace of the Gospel by a false dependence; if they be neglected, we lose the end by refusing the means.

Such, my brethren, are some of the *causes* of religious declension. Consider

II. THE EFFECTS.

1. Upon the *enjoyments* of the backslider. He no longer has the pleasure he formerly enjoyed in religious

duties. Every one of them, however occasionally and slightly performed, is a drudgery. Nor has he the pleasure he once had in the society of God's people. Their consistency reproves him; their spirituality offends him; their happiness torments him. Worship is a weariness; and the Sabbath is no longer a delight and honourable. The world has brighter charms than the Church; and his happiness is only to be hoped for in enchanted but forbidden grounds.

Sin and unfaithfulness have produced alienation from God, and shy reserve and distrust. He has no longer access —liberty—unction in prayer. With his peace, his power is gone. He may be lively, gay, and full of pleasure; yet he is not happy, but only intoxicated. A moment of reflection dissipates his dream. Nothing spiritual ministers to his joy. The wonted influences of the Spirit are withdrawn, and a worm is at the root of his gourd. He has upbraiding and condemnation, where he had approval and comfort. His passions have now no ruling principle, binding and blending all into the service, the happy service of Christ. He must either fall into stupid insensibility, or return to the Saviour, before he can know peace again.

2. *Upon his character.* The world may not readily perceive the change, but the Church will. There is a manifest and sometimes overstrained effort to keep up appearances. He is busy and bustling, without spiritual industry. He betakes himself to some external part of the work of God, something less spiritual and practical than that which formerly absorbed him. He is

more busy with the machinery than conversant and delighted with the moving power. He becomes zealous for his Church; nice and critical about orthodoxy; contends earnestly about the lesser matters of the Gospel; and labours in some work of external piety, or of religious benevolence, with far more zeal and pleasure than he would attend a Class-meeting or his own closet. Probably he soon makes worldly wisdom the basis of his plans for extending and improving the Church; and learns to do evil that good may come. He becomes more searching and censorious of the faults of others. He is severe and uncharitable in judging, not perceiving the beam in his own eye. He has no longer high, fixed purposes,—no moral elevation and vigour; but has become unstable, irresolute, and feeble.

How changed a character! He has no longer the savour of godliness; but like an iceberg, floating into temperate regions, he sensibly chills the atmosphere around him.

For our more effectual warning, let us remember, that this declension, like the working of leaven, is *gradual, but constant.* Its first influences may not be perceptible, but by its constant working it soon becomes manifest. One outward sin, one evil temper, or angry word, or lascivious desire, or covetous wish, or one wilful neglect of known duty—may admit the leaven—may open the flood-gates of evil. If unrepented of—if instant application be not made to the blood of atonement,—like a ball of snow rolling down a hill, its size and momentum will increase every moment.

Like leaven, religious declension is *silent and unobserved.* Its influence is noiseless and secret, and its evils sink like oil into the bones. There are multitudes of backsliders who cannot trace to one transgression their defection from God: memory has no record of the commencement of their apostasy. But this shows the great danger of the leaven entering the heart.

3. Its influence is *entire and fatal:* the leaven leavens the whole lump. And any one sin, lying on the conscience unrepented and unforgiven, will eat as doth a canker. The good Spirit at length becomes so grieved with the untowardness and unfaithfulness of the once pleasant child, that He gives him up to believe a lie; He makes the sin of backsliders their punishment. Backsliders in heart become backsliders in life, and at length apostates, forsaking the ordinary means of salvation, and sinning the more desperately to efface the remembrance of former joys and hopes, until at length they deny the work of God, forget that they were purged from their old sins, and crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.

SERMON X.—PRACTICAL FAITH.

"For we walk by faith, not by sight."—2 Corinthians. v. 7.

ADMIRATION of great characters is natural to us, as also the propensity to examine into the principles of their greatness. The biography of philosophers, statesmen, heroes, and benefactors of their species, are eagerly read and scrutinized, to discover, if possible, by what means their character was formed to so high a pitch of greatness and excellency. Nor is it difficult, generally, to discover the secret, so far as to be assured that there is nothing peculiar in their case, beyond the possession of decision, energy, and patient perseverance, blended with, and sustained by, a large measure of vanity and love of applause. Worldly greatness has reference to worldly considerations; human excellence is ever tainted by human frailty; and it is easy for men to understand and judge their fellow-men.

Now greatness that is only connected with the world is bred and sustained by worldly considerations. There *is* however, a greatness that is not of the world. All that the world admires and extols and enforces is exemplified and harmonized in individuals in the Church. But the men of the world cannot understand them. "The world knoweth us not." "He that is spiritual is judged," is discerned "of no man" not illuminated by

the same Spirit. Yet their examples are urged upon our attention. To study them would be profitable to the wise men of the world, and such consideration of their character is a religious duty to us. Their history is recorded for this purpose. We are specially exhorted to be "followers," imitators, "of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." The patriarchs obtained a good report by their faith. That was the leading principle of their character, the lock of their strength, the secret of their greatness. The early Christians, St. Paul especially, were noble examples of this glorious principle. *He* reveals the great truth in every part of his writings. "I know whom I have trusted."—"I am crucified with Christ."—"For we walk by faith, not by sight."

Faith, then, is the principle of the Christian's life. We see heaven before us, and we walk to it with confidence and joy: faith is to us what sight is to the world.

We call your candid and prayerful attention to two views:

I. FAITH, AS A PRINCIPLE.

II. FAITH, IN ITS PRACTICAL RESULTS.

I. FAITH AS A PRINCIPLE. What is that faith which the Scriptures so greatly commend?

The simplest notion of faith is, the belief of something as true upon the testimony of another. There must be a testimony in order to faith; for that which is evident to our own senses is matter of *knowledge*, not of belief.

Some things again are certain to us as matters of experience, such as that darkness will succeed the day, and harvest follow seed time, or that certain substances will be consumed if thrown into the fire. Faith is distinguished again from those conclusions which we draw on doubtful matters,—matters wherein it is possible we may be in error. *Opinion* is not faith.

But if a person competent to judge and worthy of credit reports such things as I have never seen, or in any wise experienced, and which I could not have discovered by any process of reasoning, and I receive his testimony concerning them: this is *belief*. The authority of him who testifies these things is his ability and integrity; and in proportion as I am convinced that he cannot be mistaken, and would not deceive, is my confidence in his testimony.

But the faith of a Christian is his assent to Divine things upon Divine testimony. Human faith receives statements upon human testimony. All history of past and distant nations, and nearly all knowledge of human affairs, rest upon this foundation: man declares to man, and man believes the word of man. But since there cannot be infallibility in the knowledge or testimony of man, and men may deceive us, there can be no absolutely infallible ground of human faith, considered in the light of belief in human testimony. And, moreover, as there are many things concerning our relation to each other and to God and to a future state on which our fellow-men are, and must be, as ignorant as ourselves, we want a communication from God about such matters as the human mind

is not conversant with and cannot possibly discover :— *we want a testimony from God, and divine faith* in it. His testimony must be infallible. He knows all things, and cannot deceive us. "God is not a man that He should lie;" and "the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." He can only offer and speak the truth; and "He cannot deny Himself."

Now here is God's testimony; first spoken immediately to His servants, and then by His servants sent unto us. His servants knew well the voice of God, that it was He who spoke to them; or how would Noah have built the ark, or Abraham have offered up his son? He afterwards spake familiarly unto Moses, revealed Himself unto Samuel the seer, spake in and by His holy prophets, and hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son. And the Spirit of Truth was afterwards given to His disciples to "guide them into all the truth," and to "show them things to come." Thus the testimony is completed; and it is authenticated and sealed by signs and wonders and mighty deeds, by miracles and prophecies, so as to challenge the faith of those who hear it; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." The testimony of the apostles was next in value and power to that which the apostles themselves received from Christ; and therefore Christ said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word." They believed on Him through His own Word; their converts through their word.

Now, just as the Jews received the earlier portions of

Divine revelation, and obeyed the laws of Moses as Divine, and trusted the promises of God in reference to the good land which was afar off; so do Christian believers *credit* the revelation of God respecting a future state of felicity for the righteous; and, trusting the promises of God to give it unto them, confess themselves to be strangers and pilgrims. Christ, the Prophet like unto Moses, tells us that in His Father's house are many mansions; and that He is gone to prepare a place for us. This city, this house, this home, is far off, out of sight, yet we credit His testimony; we rely upon His promise; we behold the Heavenly Jerusalem: we leave Egypt, we advance into the wilderness, we commit ourselves to His guidance; we are quite sure, because God, who cannot lie, hath spoken; we walk towards it; we are sure of entering in; we are "confident of this very thing;" "for we walk by faith, not by sight."

Faith, therefore, is the substitute, so to speak, for sight. As seeing our path enables us to walk in this world, so believing the testimony of God in reference to another enables us to walk as if invisible things were seen and future things were present. This view is frequent in the Scriptures. Hence Hagar in the wilderness realized the presence of God: "Thou God seest me." Moses "endured, as seeing Him who is invisible;" and "he had respect unto the recompense of the reward."

These views are illustrated and confirmed by the Apostle's definition of faith, the only definition in the Sacred Scriptures. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for." This is undoubtedly the faith by which the

just do live, as he had just before expressed it; the faith by which the persecuted Christians were to be supported in afflictions and preserved from apostasy, to conquer the world, and to triumph at last. "The *substance* of things hoped for,"—things desired and expected—and *that*, with such confidence that we shall hereafter enjoy them that they acquire the character of a present reality. "The *evidence* of things not seen"—a logical term, signifying conclusive demonstration—such a conviction of their reality, although not discoverable by sense or reason, that the mind habitually regards them as if they *were* really seen. Thus "faith is the confident expectation of things hoped for, the perfect persuasion of things not seen."

This "perfect persuasion of things not seen" sets the mind at rest; it is the repose of the intellect. This confident expectation that we shall enjoy the good we hope for and desire, is rest for the heart, repose for the affections. Whatever God has revealed is felt to be true, simply and necessarily true. "These are the true sayings of God." They concern things not seen; truths concerning God, God in Trinity; concerning the heavenly world, the true sanctuary which the Lord God hath pitched and not man; concerning heaven, the habitation of His holiness; and angels; and fallen spirits: a perfect persuasion concerning every thing pertaining to that spiritual world. Things not seen may be past facts, as concerning the creation of the world, and its history; or they may be future facts, things which shall be hereafter. *In reference* to them all, this Divine faith is a perfect

persuasion that they *are*—that the spiritual world is as real as the natural world; and that things to come are as certain as things past.

And then Faith is a confident expectation of things hoped for, of "good things to come," of all that is necessary for the safety and happiness of an immortal being; all is assured, appropriated, and in a sense, already realized. They are realities; they are promised by God, and therefore they are things to be possessed; and faith gives an anticipated possession, a present subsistence to promised good.

With this view agree those other passages which speak of faith as confidence and trust, founded first of all in a conviction of the reality of things not seen: "Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward." "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him." "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him." "In His Name shall the Gentiles trust."

And this view is confirmed by the passages which speak of the assurance enjoyed by the believer: "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him." And hence the apostle, speaking of the confidence of the Christian in the atonement of Christ, calls it "*the full assurance* of faith;" an expression only employed three times. First "the full assurance of understanding," the clearest and fullest knowledge of the Gospel, a perfect persuasion of the truth of Christianity. "The full assurance of hope,"—a

firm persuasion that we shall have grace to persevere unto the end, and so obtain the crown of life. "The full assurance of faith,"—a perfect divine conviction that we do now possess the spiritual blessings promised in the Gospel of Christ.

A natural inquiry comes in here, "Is this faith anything more than an intellectual act? Is it more than assent to evidence?"

There can be no doubt that the intellect is concerned in believing. We examine, by reason, the evidences that the Scriptures are a Divine revelation; but we are responsible for the spirit—the impartiality, activity, and docility—with which we investigate the question. But having discovered that the Bible is a Divine revelation, there ends the authority of human reason. Having reached the conviction of the Divinity of the Scriptures, we are now to be learners,—submissive of understanding, and implicit believers of all that is actually revealed. Whether these discoveries contradict or agree with the previous deductions of our reason or no, we must take the truth as it is revealed. "Faith rises into a higher reason, and knows no limit but the infinite wisdom of God, and the revelations He may be pleased to make."

But it is obvious that faith in the Scriptural sense is more than an intellectual assent to the truth of certain propositions, as that the Scriptures are a Divine revelation, that Jesus is the Messiah, and that His death is an atonement for sin. Scriptural, saving faith, that by which the just do live, implies, as we have seen,

confidence and trust, an agreement of the will with the plan of salvation, a repose of the heart upon the faithfulness of God. It is a work of the heart, for "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest" be baptized. If it were only of the intellect, it could not be affected by temptations and persecutions, sorrows and trials. If merely intellectual, it could only be affected by what is intellectual; arguments and evidence would alone increase it, and the cultivation of pious dispositions would have no effect upon it. But the fact is, that holy practice strengthens it; that the fear of reproach is a snare to faith, and persecution might destroy it; for whatever affects the heart affects our faith. With the same evidence of the truth of Christianity as before, the heart may depart from God, and we may make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience. If faith were merely an intellectual act, and not a moral principle, how could it be *tried*, as St. Peter expresses it? A set of opinions could not be tried by persecution and sorrow. But a moral principle may be tried and suffer diminution or increase, be destroyed or perfected.

And thus faith is said to be the gift of God. Peace and love with faith are "from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." Hence the disciples prayed, "Lord, increase our faith." And the father of the dumb child, when agitated with conflicting doubt and confidence, said, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." This power is of God; but is exercised by man. We are not to spend our lives in the

discussion of fruitless questions of the limits of Divine and human agency in the exercise of saving faith, but to put forth our faith, as did the man with the palsied arm.

It only remains, on this part of our subject, to observe that Christian faith must have clear Divine testimony, either in the form of declaration about things not seen, or of promise of things hoped for. Human creeds are not the ground of faith, nor are human assertions. Doctrines are to be believed, but propositions which are only assumed or conjectured, and not plainly declared in, or clearly deducible from, the Word of God, are but human opinions, not articles of faith, and therefore not binding upon men's consciences, and not necessary to salvation. Let men hold them, if they please, only let it be in charity; and let them not enforce them upon others.

But if it be so, how large a portion of controversy and its bitter consequences might easily have been avoided in the Church! How many of the subjects which yet rend the Church might at once be let alone, as not being clearly revealed, and therefore not essential matters of faith! How arrogant and how sinful, to anathematize men for not receiving the dogmas of apostolical succession in the line of Episcopal ordination as the only true Christian ministry, of infant baptismal regeneration, and a number of other propositions having no foundation in the plain reading of the Holy Scriptures! How absurd and how wicked of fallible men to come between me and God, and insist upon the reception of their notions as essential to salvation, when God hath received me!

And let us not forget that it is equally foolish and

wrong to expect the interposition of God in ways to which He has nowhere pledged Himself; expecting Him to do thus and thus, because we desire it; or, neglecting the performance of duties which are essential conditions of the promise, yet expecting their fulfilment.

But here is the plain rule and province of faith. Things unknown, undiscoverable by sense and reason, are made known by God. Faith opens the intellectual eye, and gladly and with docility accepts the light, and thus gives us a full persuasion of things not seen. Things desired, spiritual, distant, future, are promised: faith is the strong hand that grasps the promise and realizes the blessings promised by anticipation, and gives present subsistence to things hoped for. Heaven is revealed; we see it; we are pilgrims from earth to heaven, and we walk by faith, not by sight. O, happy they whose eyes the Lord hath opened! who possess a sense which others have not! whose hands grasp the desired good, and who come up out of the wilderness leaning on the Beloved!

Mark we then

II. THE RESULTS OF FAITH.

1. *A deep, habitual, practical conviction of Spiritual truths, such a sense of unseen objects as realizes them to the heart.*

Imagine a man to be possessed of an additional sense. Suppose him to see to an inconceivable distance; and at the same time to embrace the largest objects within that distance, and to discriminate the smallest; and to look,

not merely upon the surface of things but into their hidden nature, so as to discern what philosophers in vain search for. Suppose him to be able to discern myriads of spiritual beings who "walk the earth," and to see all their actions and projects. And imagine, moreover, that he had some faculty of perceiving the reasons of things, the contrivances and designs of the Great Author of the universe, in a degree to which we vainly aspire, so as to see God everywhere; to behold another world, orderly, peopled, governed, happy; and another, the scene of confusion, rebellion, mutual hatred, malignity against man, and of indescribable wretchedness. Suppose him to see human spirits leaving their bodies in rapid succession; and some ascending to light and purity and joy, others descending into darkness and penal misery. Think you such a person, living in the habitual exercise of this peculiar power, could be concerned about trifles, or regardless of the stupendous facts which this peculiar faculty revealed to him every moment? Impossible! Nay, if he were only once, for one short hour, to have sensible discoveries of these things, can you suppose that the impression would ever be effaced?

The Christian believer possesses this mysterious power. He sees spiritual things, such as eye hath not seen, such as ear hath not heard, such as the heart hath not imagined; but God hath revealed them unto him by His Spirit. He sees God, the Great Invisible. Philosophy hides God. It piles up second causes so as to eclipse *the glory* of the great First Cause. Unbelief, whether

philosophical or practical, shuts out God from His own world. But the Christian walks by faith, and therefore walks with God. The presence of God is not a mere inference from His works,—an argumentative demonstration; but an impression upon the heart. He is about our bed and about our path. His eye is upon our spirits. There is not a thought in our hearts, but He knoweth it altogether; and we feel He knows it. Yes, the believer sees God and feels he is seen of Him. He walks before Him, as Abraham; he walks with Him, as Enoch; he fears Him, as Joseph did. This checks him with a salutary fear; for he stands in awe of God; this inspires him with a divine confidence, for he has hope towards God: "*Fear not, for I am with thee.*"

The believer sees Christ; for he walks by faith. A cloud received Him out of the sight of His disciples; but faith pierces the cloud; faith lifts the veil; faith enters the true sanctuary; faith beholds the Lamb in the midst of the throne. "Whom having not seen, ye love." Faith needs no picture, no material cross, to bring near the Saviour; it finds Christ sensible to the heart. It is ever looking unto Jesus, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." We walk by faith. The Saviour walks with us, and opens to us the Scriptures, and makes our hearts burn within us.

And O! what a sense is that by which we discover such glorious truths as sustain and encourage our faith by transports of anticipation. Abraham walked by faith, when he saw the day of Christ afar off, and was glad. David walked by faith, when seeing this before, he spake

of the resurrection of Christ until his heart rejoiced, and his tongue was glad, and his flesh rested in hope.

But, as these words suggest, what a conviction does this faith give of the spiritual world by which we are surrounded and into which we must shortly enter! We are surrounded by scenes of intense interest, of awful grandeur. Unseen, spiritual, intelligent, experienced, malignant beings are ever watching us; plotting our destruction; alluring us into rebellion like their own, and intensely anxious to involve us in the same guilt and punishment. Holy angels, the servants of Jesus Christ, and our ministers, are waiting upon us, upholding us in trial, defending us from evil, strengthening us in sorrow, and waiting to be our convoy to heaven. There is a heaven of joy—the home of redeemed and of unfallen immortals; and there is a hell, open beneath us, where sin is shown in the actual experience of fallen angels to be an unmixed evil. These are great spiritual facts. We could not have discovered them, but they are discovered. To the eye of faith, they are grand, sublime, terrible realities. They are not fancies; they are not speculations; they are awful facts. Faith realizes their existence. Although spiritual, they are, in a sense, palpable; although distant, they are brought immediately near; they press upon us; they are familiar to us. We live on the borders of this unseen world; we make excursions into it. We tremble at the apprehension of the miseries of the lost; we exult in the hopes and triumphs of the saved.

How exhilarating the thought to the happy believer!

How intimately near does the Apostle place us to the Redeemer! "*Absent from the body, . . . present with the Lord.*" *At home in the body*, we step out at once into the presence of Christ. The rending of the tabernacle brings us at once into the world where we shall see Him as He is. "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." How near does He bring that spiritual world! We are already come "to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels." How thin the veil which hides that world from us! And how transporting those moments when the dim medium becomes almost transparent; when, like Stephen, looking up "steadfastly into heaven," we behold "the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God," and are ready with our invocation, to commit our spirits to His guardian care; when the "ministering host of invisible friends" is seen flitting across our vision, busy in the service of our common Master; when sister spirits seem ready to bear us on their pinions home!

2. Intimately connected with these views and resulting from such convictions, *is a supreme concern for personal salvation.* This is the great concern with the believer, and rules everything else. He cannot lose sight of it; he cannot neglect or delay it. The whole volume of revelation presses him to this as the great business of human life. All other matters sink into insignificance; and when they interfere with the salvation of the soul, are but a grand impertinence. He that sees the judgment-seat of Christ, and remembers that every man must give account of himself to God, and that the secrets of men's

hearts shall be judged according to the Gospel, and that the righteous will scarcely be saved, may well be decided and inflexible, may well give up whatever endangers his soul.

Brethren, how is it that you neglect the one thing needful? Why are you not saved? Because you do not make religion your supreme, all-absorbing concern. And why does it not wholly absorb you? Because you do not believe the revelation of God. You expect happiness in sin; although God has said it is an evil and a bitter thing. You expect impunity in sin; although God has said, "The wages of sin is death." But you do not believe God. You walk by sight, and not by faith. You neglect, despise, contradict the light of truth, and compass yourselves with sparks of your own kindling. And God says, "This shall ye have of Mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow."

3. Another result of walking by faith is, *A holy contempt of the world.* When the Jews, in the pride of their hearts, wanted to draw the attention of Christ to the glory of their temple, He deigned them no flattering words. He Who was familiar with the glory of His Father's house above, saw no glory in the temple made with hands. He Who had respect to the joy that was set before Him, could not be allured by the splendid vision of earthly glory which the tempter spread before Him in the wilderness. And so is it with those who have seen the glory of the heavenly country. "The kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," have no charms for the believer. Its riches are nothing; its honours *nothing*; its pursuits and pleasures nothing.

When we walk by sight, our care and concern is for the world, how to secure its wealth and blessings. We are miserable when visited by loss or reproach or disappointment. We affect the society of worldly men; we court their smiles; we dread their frowns; we imitate their follies. But when we walk by faith, earth has no charms for us. We use it for our work's sake and for our Master's sake; but it is only our inn, our temporary lodging-place. Our intercourse with it is as brief as possible. We are alien in spirit to its pursuits and enjoyments. We are crucified to the world, and the world unto us: there is an open rupture, a complete alienation, a mutual disregard. It is as a dead thing to us. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

4. Again, walking by faith creates *a blessed superiority to the troubles and sufferings of life.* This was the special view of the Apostle in the text and context. He had been speaking of his own sufferings, with which any of ours are hardly to be compared. But the discoveries of faith made him see a blessed recompense for suffering—glory, a weight of glory, a far more exceeding weight of glory, and this eternal. What a contrast to light afflictions, but for a moment! His afflictions were great in themselves, and great compared with the lot of others, but light in comparison with the weight of glory. This prospect, this seeing things that are not seen, and eternal, renewed his inward man day by day. He knew that there would soon come a period, in the revolution of eternity, when all the most excruciating bodily and

mental sufferings of this present time shall appear to be a speck in the distant dawn of duration; when we shall wonder and adore that such little circumstances should yield such results; that the grain of mustard-seed should so grow.

Yes, faith enables us to make a right estimate of afflictions. We look at them in their certain results if we be faithful. How easy is it to renounce the world and to endure a great fight of afflictions, when we can walk by faith, and discern a Father correcting His son, and lay hold of the grace promised to a faithful people, and connect all with the atonement of Christ, so that through His infinite merit, our suffering shall perfect our character, and infinitely enhance our reward!

Finally, walking by faith *anticipates the glorious reward of heavenly happiness.*

Faith is the present subsistence of things hoped for. Something of heaven is given to us on earth. Grapes of Eshcol indicate the quality and fulness of the vintage. Holiness here implants the joys to be possessed hereafter. "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face." We best understand the nature of the heavenly felicity when we enjoy the fruits of saving faith and the earnest of the inheritance. Walking by faith carries us beyond the dark, dull confines of this world, and enables us to dwell in the confines of the heavenly city.

SERMON XI.—THE HELP OF THE SPIRIT.

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities."—Romans viii. 26.

THIS chapter exhibits the privileges of the children of God, and contains all that is needful to any of them in conflict, duty, or suffering; especially furnishing motives and helps to perseverance in their Christian course. In the first part of this eighth chapter, the Apostle exhibits the counterpart to the seventh, which describes a state of guilt, bondage, and fear. When the Spirit is given in answer to our penitent trust, we are saved from condemnation, and from the power of sin. But we are not saved from *suffering*. This will continue through life, even in the case of the believer; and some of his sufferings are peculiar to him as such. He must often endure persecution for Christ's sake, and be willing to suffer with Him, that he may be glorified with Him. Although, therefore, we have the first-fruits of the Spirit, we groan within ourselves; and are only sustained by the hope of perfect purity and perfect bliss in heaven. The purity of heaven is that which the believer here aspires after with unutterable desire; and the joyful hope of it enables him with patience to wait for it, and to purify himself even as Christ is pure. He longs for purity; he pants after it with vehement desire; and he is gaining it.

But every discovery of the Divine purity discovers to him his own imperfections; and all his efforts to reach the height of the law Divine serve only to make him feel his own infirmities; the evils incident to one who is maimed and hurt by the fall,—who is liable to surprises, compassed with temptations, who feels his weakness, and is often betrayed, through ignorance and surprise, through constitutional bias and difficult circumstances, into violations of the perfect law. His infirmities make him come short of the Divine rule in the measure of his obedience; and he groans for the perfection of holy service and the full enjoyment of God.

But as hope of rest sustains us under outward afflictions, so likewise, *in the like manner*, the Spirit *helpeth* our infirmities and weaknesses. The Greek word means to lean over against one, to bear a part, as one who helps another under a burden. "To lay hold of any weight to be carried on the opposite side, and so help a person to shoulder it."

Now the Spirit *helpeth* our *infirmities; i.e.*, those frailties of our nature which disincline us to bear the trials of virtue, and indispose us to the discipline of God, and to our real good. He helpeth us against these things, by various suggestions, and by increase of our power. This clause, therefore, refers to the aids of the Spirit of God, especially in respect of our infirmities. All good thoughts, purposes, desires, hopes, enjoyments, are of God the Holy Spirit; the whole work of Grace being the operation of God. Whatever moral good is in us—from the *lowest* measure of the fear of God to the highest enjoyments

of perfect love and holy fellowship—is by the Spirit, Who worketh in us to will and to do.

Our infirmities: this term must be confined to such things as have not the *concurrence of our will*—things which belong to our nature; to the infirmity of our flesh. The same expression is employed by St. Paul (1 Cor. ii. 3) in describing his state of mind on going to Corinth. And especially Hebrews v. 2, in showing the character of priests—they being "compassed with infirmity," liable to error and sin. So the Apostle glories in his infirmities (2 Cor. xii. 9). So Christ, Who "took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses," is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," having been assailed by the enemy through these, like as we are (Hebrews iv. 15). In this class we may not include our voluntary transgressions,—our wilful, perverse tempers, our unchecked constitutional tendencies,—our willing pursuit or entertainment of evil, but only those which we cannot avoid, constituted and circumstanced as we are. Such are dulness of understanding, so that we cannot readily apprehend what we nevertheless wish to know; inability to pursue what is intricate, to disentangle what is perplexing, to discern between things that differ, to see the force and application of a Scripture principle or rule. The slowness and obscurity of our understanding is a great infirmity; for to grow in knowledge is a duty. Beside, our faith is in proportion to our knowledge,—at least, that is not faith which knows nothing of its warrant for trusting, and expecting blessings from God; and if we are to grow in grace, it must be by growing in the knowledge of our

Lord Jesus Christ. An infirmity the Spirit will help like a kind and painstaking teacher, who assists the pupil, simplifies his lesson, suggests the rules, or illustrates the subject so as to bring it within his grasp.

It is our infirmity that we so readily shrink from what gives us pain, bodily or mental; that we are so sensitive, so apprehensive, so timid, perhaps especially so in one or two points peculiar to ourselves, in kind or degree; that we shrink from grappling with difficult or dangerous duties, and are disposed, not to deny our duty, much less to refuse it, but to transfer or to postpone it; that we cannot bring ourselves readily with impartiality, that is to say, with heroism, with moral courage, to decide upon our course. We hesitate, and vacillate, until we have expended more strength in the controversy with ourselves than would have sufficed to discharge the duty. This infirmity in many instances makes people live in bondage through the fear of death, or rather *dying;* and the apprehension that there is something in dying to try their physical energy beyond the force of any illness they have ever known, and the fear of the grave, produce a constant bondage.

In these, or other respects, we are the subjects of infirmity; and if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead, and Who will hereafter quicken our mortal bodies, dwell in us, He will help the infirmities incident to such as dwell in houses of clay,—infirmities which have no concurrence of the will,—which we endeavour to provide against, or resist, but which we cannot hope to be fully freed from while here. He will

suggest to the mind, will fortify the heart, will preserve in peace, will increase our fortitude, will bring good out of evil, and make the lapses which arise from surprise, occasions of greater watchfulness, and the peculiarity of our nature or circumstances a means of advancing our holiness.

But the Apostle, in the second place, applies this general truth to a particular case: *help* in *prayer*. Such is the darkness that is in us, our ignorance, weakness, and distress, that "we know not what we should pray for." Such is the language of the well-instructed and well-disciplined Christian. The novice thinks he knows, and in his ardour imagines *he* cannot err whose heart rejoices in the Divine favour. But the well-instructed disciple says, "Lord, teach us to pray." The provision for this duty is in the Spirit of grace and supplication. "The *Spirit Himself*"—the same Spirit—the Spirit of God and of Christ, of adoption and of life—maketh intercession within us—"*strongly complaineth for us according to God.*" He stirs us up to pray, and strengthens us in prayer; He moreover suggests to us *what* we should pray for, and *how* we should pray.

This intercession of the Spirit differs from the intercession of Christ, in respect of office. 1. The Holy Spirit is our Paraclete, our Advocate by virtue of His residence in our hearts; but Christ by dwelling in heaven in the immediate presence of God. 2. Christ is our Advocate with the Father formally, as God-man and our Mediator, by virtue of His own merit; the Holy Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son to the faithful, and intercedes effectively in our hearts, as our Helper.

The words are strong and emphatic—*He greatly assists —affords much help*, in our frail, infirm, afflicted, troubled state, by making intercession for us, in sighs or groans, the full meaning of which cannot be spoken in words; the intensity of desire is unutterable.

Here observe, 1. That we are not in this help to look for something perceptibly distinct from all the operations of our own minds; something extrinsic to our own faculties, or some bodily sensation. He works in us by imparting His influence in concurrence with our own efforts. The ordinary means of instruction, grace, and comfort, are to be used; and in them we are to look for such influence and help of the Spirit as shall meet our necessities. There are no marks, no *criteria*, by which to judge absolutely and metaphysically what is Divine,—what that help is in its essence. You cannot separate the human from the Divine in this respect; and He helps us *in praying*, does not pray for us. The Spirit thus helps us, by bearing part of our burden, or by strengthening us to bear it; by helping us in prayer; while we stir up ourselves to take hold upon His strength.

Let us not wait for, or expect, some sensible sign or token by which we can infallibly judge of certain exercises of our minds, how far and how much is of God. We may be fully persuaded that substantially we are praying in the Holy Ghost, when we cannot be sure that such a thought, or such an impulse was wholly of God, unmixed with those infirmities to which the Apostle alludes. We inquire not wisely in this matter, for it is past our finding out.

2. Nor let us, on the other hand, be beaten out of the full and blessed persuasion that the Holy Spirit *does* help us in prayer. We cannot determine how, in form, He works in us: but is the fact therefore disputable? As well might we deny that we can influence each other's minds; or that food strengthens our bodies, or that a cordial revives our spirits, because we cannot describe the *modus operandi.* And if we cannot understand the earthly things with which, as facts, we are familiar, how can we understand these heavenly things which refer to the operations of the Spirit upon our hearts?

The help of the Spirit is afforded in prayer in several respects.

1. *By deeply impressing us with a sense of God's immediate presence.*

Prayer is intercourse with God, coming into the presence of God, transacting soul-business with God. It is necessary therefore, first of all, that the world should be shut out from our minds, and that we should individually be alone with God. Herein we require Divine aid to realize His presence. In prayer, it is not sufficient that we set before us an ideal God, a metaphysical abstraction, a compound of attributes which it is the business of theology to discuss, but which puts God far from man. As well might we pray to the God of nature, whose perfections are imperfectly defined by philosophy as the First Cause of all things. Nor is it enough to have a mere play of emotion, a sentiment of benevolence, a sense of grandeur and goodness combined. All this will keep us back *from God*—the God of the Bible, from

Him *with Whom we have to do.* In prayer we must not pile up worlds and spheres and systems between us and God; nor crowd the space with hosts of various orders of intelligent beings. We must neither place God in a distant palace of created splendour, nor lay stepping stones to His throne; we may not map out His perfections, or engage in theological consideration of His nature or attributes, when we pray. We must *seek unto God,*—the God of the Scriptures; the God of Whom we know nothing as pertaining to our soul's salvation but as He has graciously revealed Himself in His Word. The Spirit Who searches all things, yea, the deep things of God, has revealed Him as far as is practicable or necessary; and it is His work to bring home those discoveries to our minds and hearts, so that we realize God's peculiar presence when we pray. He is not far from every one of us, but we see Him not: the natural man cannot discern the things of God.

But the help of the Spirit is to make me feel God: to bring home the truth, that He is the loving Father of all mankind, not an unconcerned spectator of my sorrows and struggles, and unutterable desires, but that He cares for *me.* He no longer displays Himself as in the ancient times, and under the more imperfect dispensations, by visible and sensible manifestations of His power and grace and glory; but He seeketh such to worship Him, as worship in spirit and in truth. We are not taught to expect anything more than that He will talk with us, allow us to reason with Him, and to plead with Him for mercy and grace. In all other

respects the Scriptures maintain their own simple grandeur, a sublime silence. We are to take our impression from His works and His word; and there is a vigour and a freshness and a warmth about all the Scripture representations which make even him who says, "I am a worm, and no man," yet lift up his head; and the child say, "Our Father which art in heaven."

All cannot estimate those discoveries which refer to the spirituality of His nature, His immensity, His omnipotence; but all can understand the relation He bears to us as our Father. The Spirit comes to reveal Him to us; to show that He is placable, to assure us of His love, to give us to feel our interest in Him, to open up hallowing and delightful intercourse.

If, therefore, the Spirit in this respect, helps our infirmities, the effect will be a holy reverence. He is greatly to be feared and to be had in reverence. He is glorious in holiness. They can have no right impressions, no deep, Scriptural sense of the presence of God, who enter on prayer with light, careless, thoughtless, undevout minds, nor those who have less reverence for God than they have for a fellow mortal who is a little higher in station than themselves; who can use terms of familiarity which they would not employ to any eminently holy being; or who indulge in levity in prayer, either in language or spirit. God does not lift up the veil, and they would break through to gaze, without fear. Hence, confusion, abasement, and reverence, will be the fruit of the Spirit's influence in making us feel that we have entered the more immediate presence of God.

2. *By showing us clearly the way to God by Jesus Christ, and imparting to us a filial confidence.*

The first great work is to prompt us to pray, to induce us to seek His face that we may live. We are so indisposed to what is spiritual, partly from our constant intercourse with a visible, material world, and partly from our want of a spiritual appetite, a relish for Divine things, that it is with great difficulty we are brought to pray at all,—to feel our need of mercy and help. And then, when we are so far awakened, we are usually filled with a just fear of threatened wrath, and Satan suggests to our evil hearts unjust suspicions and fears in reference to God. "Will He not reject me? What ground have I to believe that He will not spurn me from His footstool? In what way can a just God be merciful? the Most Holy look upon sinners? the faithful God remit the punishment to the guilty?"

The answer to these questions forms the burden of the Scripture doctrine of salvation by Christ. He is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Christ, by His sufferings and obedience unto death, has satisfied Divine justice, and opened the way for God to receive sinners to the arms of His love, honourably to His purity and justice. Now, this is a difficult lesson to learn in practice: to walk in this way so as to find rest unto our souls. We are so anxious to prepare ourselves by good works, or at least to better our condition for approaching God; we are so unwilling to forgive others their offences against us, that we readily suppose God is, and must be, unwilling to forgive our trespasses; we have such imperfect views of the vastness of Christ's merits,

of the compassions of the Saviour, of the mercy of God, and of the benignity and power of the Spirit, that we falter, doubt, and disbelieve, and we cannot find God. Even those whom He has justified, when they see their unfaithfulness, and discern more fully the sinfulness of sin as set in the light of His countenance, can hardly be persuaded to come again with boldness to the Throne of Grace. They need help.

Now, it is the work of the Spirit to give us clear views of the atonement of Christ; to set before us, vividly and impressively, the all-sufficiency of His merit; the perfect, the infinite satisfaction of God in the meritorious work of His Son; the readiness of God to pardon, to accept, to justify, to sanctify, to comfort, to save, to glorify, all who simply trust in Christ; and the consistency of all His declarations and promises with all His threatenings, and with all His perfections.

The light in which He sets forth these precious things is not dull, cold and dry, but bright, warm and vivifying. His light is vital, and He brings these things near to us. He shows God on a throne of grace, holding to us the sceptre of mercy and favour, and assuring us of all blessings in Christ. He clears away the mists with which our minds are enveloped through ignorance, prejudice, sin and unbelief. He simplifies our minds and assists the efforts of our faith, so that we can throw ourselves beneath the mercy-seat in confidence, and plead with God as a man with his friend. He raises in us the cry, "Abba, Father," giving us the confidence of children; so that we are bold to plead with God, to

spread all necessities before Him, to remind Him of His gracious promises, and to wrestle with Him until we prevail.

Lastly. The Spirit intercedes within us *by intense, inexpressible desires after the full image and enjoyment of God;* with groanings that are unutterable.

"Even we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body," from the grave. Deliverance from the evils of this life, and full and perfect conformity to the image of God, meetness for heaven, and a translation to heaven, are the objects on which we expend these intense desires. And no wonder. When we are so oppressed by affliction, pain, sorrow and distressing apprehensions, that we scarcely know how to maintain our confidence and peace; when we are tossed and buffeted by the enemy of all righteousness and of the Church's peace; when we fear the dangers of our state, and feel the pressure of the body, and find out so much imperfection in our best services, and feel ourselves compassed with infirmity, liable to depart from God, and never beyond the reach of our enemies, nor the awful possibility of perishing, well may we exclaim, "O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest .... I would hasten my escape from the stormy wind and tempest."

And when, on the other hand, we see the beauty of holiness, the delight of a full surrender of all to God, the bliss of those who drink deepest at the pure river of the water of life; when we mourn over the remains of sin,

deploring its existence, and longing, panting, for its destruction; when the holiness of Christ, and the happiness of the saints and angels who never sin, is before us; above all, when God takes us and puts us in the cleft of the rock and passes by, proclaiming His name, and showing us all His goodness,—what wonder if we groan for perfect holiness, and long passionately with unutterable sighings for heaven? All this is the work of the Holy Spirit. He fills us with this holy mourning. He makes us thus happily dissatisfied with created good. He enlarges our hearts with intense fervours, and sets before us blessings too great to be expressed in poor empty language, too vast to be comprehended by us. Our vehement souls stand still; and they groan the unutterable groan which the Spirit inspires and sustains.

Thus the sighs and groans of the believer are the voice of the Spirit of intercession. "The Divine Spirit does not groan or intercede in or by Himself, as God and belonging to the Trinity; but He intercedes by His influence upon us, and by leading us to aspirations which language cannot express." "The prayer passes, as it were, from the Spirit through him who is the subject of it." And thus does He help our infirmity.

The question naturally recurs: although I cannot determine as to the amount of Divine influence in any particular prayer, having no marks by which I can infallibly judge what is directly and without human admixture from God,—yet cannot I practically judge whether I pray in the Holy Ghost? Is there nothing

by which I can know that the Spirit has been with me in prayer? For your direction take these distinguishing marks of the work of the Holy Spirit in true believers, as a Spirit of prayer.

1. A *natural* excitement to prayer is more frequently and earnestly for an outward mercy; whereas a *spiritual* excitation is as frequently and eminently for a mercy to the soul.

2. In a natural elevation of spirit in prayer, however lively and warm, there is no clear view of the Divine character, especially of the power and love displayed in the condescending assistance bestowed in prayer. Let the life declare whether we have any clearer perceptions of the majesty and holiness of God.

3. Mere natural feeling never humbles the soul before God; but on the contrary the Spirit of God always humbles us.

4. Natural boldness and affectionateness may lead persons to use such expressions of confidence as belong to those who now partake of the Spirit of Adoption, which yet is not dwelling in them. When we are most under the influence of the Spirit in our prayers, we are best enabled to utter the cry of God's children, "Abba, Father;" then we most clearly and assuredly see our interest in God as our covenant God and Father. The one cries like a beggar, whose fervency is his sense of being ready to perish; the other pleads with his Father, under the conviction of his relation to Him as His adopted child, and with the firm faith that God will bestow all that is needful for him.

5. One who prays in his own strength has not that sacred familiarity with God which distinguishes him who has Divine help. The difference is vast between mere expressions of holy familiarity, and that real, spiritual, sensible access to God which abases while it emboldens; which leads to adoration of the Divine condescension and mercy, while the soul pleads as with a friend.

6. Mere natural eloquence in prayer brings none of those reasons and considerations which are effectual with God as well as moving to our own hearts; whereas the Spirit, suggesting nothing but what is agreeable to the will of God, furnishes such arguments from God's nature, designs, promises and dealings, as prove effectual in our intercessions.

7. A Christian, divinely assisted, is importunate, while a natural flush is soon expended.

8. The formalist, after his devotions, pleases himself with his frames and feelings, and rests his hope of an answer on the performance of the duty; but upon the least appearance of delay or ill-success in his prayers, faints, and his hope vanishes; whereas the Christian is easy and satisfied, and waits, patient of all delays, being only careful not to hinder his prayers by idleness, uncharitableness, disobedience, or unbelief.

9. A Christian thus favoured is anxious for the return of opportunities of praise and prayer; while the other is dilatory in returning to such duties.

10. Mere natural power in prayer is often followed by idleness as to the use of rational and appointed means to secure an answer; but the Christian is as diligent as if

he had neither promise to plead, nor Divine help and assurance in pleading it.

11. A prayer really suggested by the Spirit is never disappointed in the direct return; natural emotions often are.

12. Whatever certainty a Christian may have of the Divine intercession within him, or of the return to his prayers, he is far less bold and ready to express it than he who has been merely under the influence of natural feeling.

13. In answer to such prayers there are not only certain returns, but these are often brought about by such special means that God is seen as much in the answer as in the help to prayer; and often the more extraordinary the Divine influence in the prayer, the more extraordinary the way of effecting the answer. Ordinary prayers have but answers in the ordinary course of things, and the sanctifying results from them are small.

14. After prayer by Divine help, a resolution more than ever to address God in all our concerns, and to plead for the promised intercession, springs up in the soul.

15. When the Spirit has been interceding within us, it is not that we may talk about it, so as to gain a religious reputation as men who have great power with God, but that we may be more holy by being more humble.

16. By such frequent prayers a Christian obtains clearer views of the nature and extent of Divine intercession in prayer, so as to distinguish it from resemblances, and to derive comfort from it with little liability to mistake.

SERMON XII.—THE LAMB SLAIN.

"The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."—Revelation xiii. 8.

THE law of progression is obvious in all the works of God. An Infinite Being could only be known by progressive manifestation.

Not only did the work of creation thus reveal more and more of the perfections of God, from the formation of the lowest unorganized matter to the creation of man, capable of reflecting the moral image of his Maker; but all the dispensations of *providence* have also been progressive. At first it was the sustentation and ordering of the inferior elements, and then the lowest forms of life, until it became the vast and wise and gracious government of all material, intelligent, and moral creation; at first administered over a pure, unsinning world, and then, complicated, to our view, by the invasion of sin. Providence is now, in its highest aspects, a wondrous system for over-ruling moral evil, and accomplishing the greatest moral good in counteraction of all evil agencies. It reveals a moral government, and makes God practically known.

But *redemption* more perfectly establishes our notion of progress and development as the law of Divine

procedure. We can see the moment when the wondrous scheme commenced. The declared purpose is dated; the first truth is enunciated by God to a man like ourselves; the fact is divinely recorded; the truth can be traced through its wonderful stages of development. The first light rests upon a thunder-cloud, and gradually fringes its edges, as with molten silver, until its whole body is pervaded with the growing brightness of the original promise. The seminal truth is first deposited in paradise; and there it deeply fixes its roots; and, nourished by the dews of heaven, it becomes the tree of life unforbidden, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. The original promise is comparatively obscure and limited; but by successive revelations is augmented, until all men can see the Seed of the Woman in the Virgin-born Son of God. The first indication of enmity and bruising, of conflict and conquest, is succeeded by the idea of sacrifice and shedding of blood, *covering*, atonement, propitiation, redemption, pardon, holiness and salvation; until the language of earth becomes the language of heaven. The visions of the last prophet become full of the symbols of sacrifice; and the brightest point of heaven's glory is that object on which the gaze of the redeemed shall be for ever fixed, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." This is the final cause of all that is; and, we have reason to believe, the final revelation of the God of glory,—inexhaustible,—infinite,—eternal.

Let us then direct your attention to the theme which surpasses all others, in interest, importance, and duration.

Our text is dislocated, we grant; but the sense is complete, and is met with in many other portions of the Sacred Writings. Christ is, in innumerable passages, spoken of as a Lamb,—"a Lamb without blemish and without spot," "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." He is, therefore a sacrificial Lamb, a Lamb substituted and "*slain.*" The term is sacrificial, and clearly indicates a victim of atonement. But the phrase also declares that from "the foundation of the world," this Lamb has been "slain," not actually, but virtually; in intention and purpose. We have, therefore, simply to trace this one purpose and counsel as God has revealed it, an event contemplated before the fall; running through all the dispensations of truth and grace, and reaching its consummation in eternal glory.

The sacrificial atonement existed

First, In THE ETERNAL COUNSELS OF GOD.

Before the foundations of the world, He that calleth "things which be not as though they were," declares the Lamb slain. The actual event belonged to time; but to Him Who is Infinite Prescience it was certain, and was foreseen as fact, that Christ should die for the sins of men. To Him all real, all possible, and all contingent events are fully known. The circumstances of man's trial were ordered from everlasting, and the issue foreknown, although not decreed. And the remedy was equally purposed from eternity; for we were "redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was *foreordained*

before the foundation of the world." (1 Peter i. 18—20.) This was the sublime purpose of Him Who inhabiteth eternity. The end of creation could only be secured by redemption; and this could only be by a Mediator. Redemption is a mediatorial constitution, the foundation of which is the Lamb slain for the sins of men. All the affairs of the entire universe rest upon the grand Mediatorial system; all is carried on with reference to the work of Christ; everything was made by Him, and for Him; and all things are regulated "according to the eternal purpose which He purposed *in Christ Jesus* our Lord." "In Whom we have redemption .... according to His good pleasure which He hath *purposed* in Himself." (Eph. i. 7—10.)

The same truth of the eternal counsel of God, that Christ should be slain, and that it is the great purpose which, like the sun in the centre of our system, diffuses light and force through all the counsels and operations of God,—is obvious from the views contained in this book. The counsels which were of old, even from everlasting, are administered in the name and by the authority of Christ. The book is sealed with seven seals, and is impenetrable to all, save the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David; He hath prevailed to open the book. And who is He? "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne .... a Lamb as it had been slain." (Rev. v. 6.) He is in the very centre of influence and power—"in the midst of the throne;" and He opens the book, Who is the Atoning Victim; so that all decrees, plans, works, government, remedial measures,

moral and saving influences, come forth from Him,—"the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

How mysterious these truths! They are not mysteries in the sense of being not revealed;—they are declared. "From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God!" Thou changest not! Thy counsels are faithfulness and truth! Their depth no finite mind can fathom! We can only exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" But how great a comfort that these everlasting counsels are full of mercy! "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace, and not of evil." God has no purpose of destruction, no decree of wrath. "Fury is not in Me." Nothing can bring wrath upon the sinner but the rejection of this mercy; and *that* will bring wrath to the uttermost. But "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." He has neither designed sin nor its punishment. Sin resulted from human free-agency, without which man could not be responsible. But His counsel is for our salvation, the reign of God over the mind of man; "according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." (Eph. i. 4.)

Secondly, The Lamb slain is seen in THE TRANSACTIONS OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

God made man of the dust of the earth; and afterwards placed him in the garden of Eden. He appears

to have been placed there in a public capacity, as the federal Head of the race; and in that character had the grant made to him of the fruits of that delectable spot, the comprehension of all that was fair and good in the whole creation of God, and the commands given him by his Maker and Sovereign. After this, the woman was formed of a part of himself; to shadow forth a great spiritual mystery concerning Christ and His Church, and more plainly to indicate that "the head of the woman is the man." The woman was first in the transgression; but upon both fell the fearful curse of a violated law. Both sinned, and the sin of Adam, our federal Head, broke the covenant and brought upon us the curse.

Yet in the first sentence of death which the universe had known as a penalty for moral offence, (for the sinning angels were only dispossessed,) there were accents of mercy. The purpose which ruled all other purposes, was immediately made known:—The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head: He who shall be born of a woman shall overcome and destroy him who by his successful temptations has destroyed man. This was the first ray of hope which mitigated the darkness of that hour of guilt and fear. This word of promise ameliorated the curse pronounced on the earth and on man, and laid the firm foundation of a system of grace; not opposed to justice, not contrary to law, but in harmony with both. The arraigned transgressor vainly hoped to hide himself from the eye of his Judge; the Judge Himself provides the method of mitigating and finally revoking the penalty but just incurred. Even the

brief, the very brief, narrative shows that the verbal revelation now noticed, was not all the comfort given to man. The promise was illustrated by action,—action the most significant and expressive, because symbolical. "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them." It is natural to conclude that animals had been slain: no one would suppose that they had died of themselves. Adam certainly would not have taken away life without a direct permission; and the doctrine of sacrifice alone furnishes an adequate reason for slaying animals at this early period. If we suppose therefore that the first guilty pair were clothed with the skins of beasts slain in sacrifice according to the command of God, we have a solution of the case which perfectly harmonizes with the preceding statements, and fitly introduces the long line of sacrifices which were, beyond dispute, authoritatively appointed and Divinely sanctioned. The further probability is, that this sacrifice was a whole burnt offering, like those offered by the patriarchs; and that then was begun the practice afterwards recognized by Moses, that the priest should have "the skin of the burnt-offering." (Leviticus vii. 8.)

Thus before our fallen parents were driven from the blessed enclosure, where was the holy of holies of all the earth, where dwelt the peculiar tokens of the Divine habitation, and where God talked with man, the nakedness of their guilt was covered by a typical but accepted sacrifice of atonement. They went forth trembling, but inspired with a Divine hope; sorrowful, but holding to

their lips the cup of consolation; helpless, but resting on the almighty arm of Him Who was to come. Now, the blighted earth may repay man's toil; in his labour there shall be profit; his body, now subject to fatigue, disease, decay, shall be invigorated by the very sweat of his face, for labour shall become a blessing to both body and mind; the whole curse becomes remedial; and "returning unto dust" is the presage and pledge of immortality. Death is the passage to life; at the very time that he feels paradise is lost, he learns that paradise is regained.

Thirdly, the Lamb slain is seen under THE PATRIARCHAL DISPENSATION.

It would appear from what has been advanced that not only was the fact of the redemption of the lost inheritance known to our first parents; but something also of the *mode;* that it was to be by expiatory sacrifice. Every particular, as now known to us, could not have been revealed, for that would have been to invert the order and purpose of prophecy, which is only fully explained by the event; but such a revelation was made as would sustain and direct the faith of men, and especially would lead them to renounce all hope of saving themselves, and to put their trust in another.

Such knowledge would be communicated to the family of Adam; and we might expect to find the worship offered by them to embody the principles and truths which marked his condition immediately after the fall. Accordingly, in the first explicit and full record of

worship after the expulsion from Eden we find an animal sacrifice. Cain presents only the fruits of the earth, as a eucharistic offering; Abel presents also the firstlings of his flock. "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect." Wherefore? Two brothers, the earliest born of mankind, both doubtless alike instructed, both engaged at the same time in worship,—why is one accepted, and the other rejected? Abel, so signally, so supernaturally, accepted, that Cain painfully knew the marked distinction, and was wroth? St. Paul gives the key to the facts which Moses records. "By *faith* Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous." (Heb. xi. 4.) There had been a revelation, and Abel believed God's testimony; there had been a promise, and Abel trusted it. The facts demonstrate the Divine institution of sacrifice, or Abel must have worshipped God in vain, following merely a commandment of his father, or an invention of his own. Thus early, thus authoritatively, was the shedding of blood appointed as the prefigurative rite which was to show forth the one only efficacious Sacrifice for the sins of men, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

The whole patriarchal dispensation rested on the same truths. The distinction between clean and unclean obtained before the flood, and was Divinely sanctioned in the miracle of preservation. The burnt-offering of Noah immediately on his release from the ark, was accepted as was that of Abel: "the Lord smelled a

sweet savour," a strong expression of approval. The burnt-offerings of Job were also stamped with the Divine acceptance; and, like that of Abraham, were subjects of express command. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." He not only saw it in the gracious promises given to him, but especially in the significant transactions of Mount Moriah, when God provided Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering. There the doctrine of substitution was clearly revealed, and the faith of Abraham was honoured with new and enlarged promises; until it became a proverb, "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." He saw the day of Christ, the great event of the times of the Messiah, and was glad, when his faith discerned "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

There may have been other methods and occasions in which the Messenger of the Covenant manifested Himself under the patriarchal dispensation. As the Voice or Word of Jehovah walked in the midst of the garden, so did He also frequently manifest Himself to the Fathers. He appeared as an Angel, the Angel of the Lord,—the Man-Jehovah, whose feet Abraham washed, and who partook of his hospitality; and who wrestled with Jacob, and blessed him.

Fourthly, the Lamb slain is shown in THE LEVITICAL SACRIFICES.

We have seen that shedding the blood of animals formed an important part of the worship of the Patriarchs; *and that* it is so contrary to the reason, and interests

and common sentiments of mankind, that it could hardly be thought to originate with man; and that its Divine acceptance plainly shows that it was not a will-worship. To prevent the corruption and abuse of this doctrine, we find God giving it fixity; lodging it with one people; separating them from all other nations; and constituting the shedding of the blood of a piacular victim the very central point of a vast religious system. "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood."

There are three sacrifices especially, which clearly reveal the doctrine of atonement. Every morning and evening, a lamb was offered to God in sacrifice. These were burnt as holocausts, but by a small fire, that they might continue burning the longer. Thus did the Jews daily express their sense of guilt, and their hope of pardon through the promised Redeemer.

There was, secondly, the paschal lamb first sacrificed as the means of the preservation of the Israelites from the hand of the destroying angel, when the first-born were slain in Egypt. This ceremony was to be observed as an ordinance for ever, to typify Him Who is "our Passover, sacrificed for us," the sprinkling of Whose blood can alone protect us from the visitations of wrath and judgment. This whole appointment was framed to express, symbolically, but at large, the doctrine of Christ's atonement. The victim was to be a lamb, spotless, and in its highest state of perfection; its blood was to be poured out, and then to be sprinkled on the door-posts; and its body was to be consumed by fire; it was to be eaten in haste, and with bitter herbs. These and other

particulars serve clearly to indicate the sacrifice of "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." "Ye are come to the blood of sprinkling." "The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

We may see the atonement of Christ, thirdly, in the great annual expiation of the Levitical law. The victims offered on this day, including the daily burnt-offerings were fifteen in number. Of these the most remarkable were the two goats upon which the high priest cast lots, to know which should be immediately sacrificed; and which, after having had the sins of the people confessed upon him, and ceremonially transferred to him, should be sent away as the scape-goat into the wilderness, to be found no more. On this solemn day, the high priest himself slew the victim. He was himself to be made typically pure by first presenting for his own sins and those of his house, the blood of a bullock; and then only was he permitted to enter into the most holy place to make atonement for the sins of the people by offering the blood of the goat on which the lot of death had fallen. The two goats thus express the atonement for the sins of men by the death of Christ; and the clearing away, the bearing away, of the sins of men by the sufferings of our Divine Substitute. This whole service is divinely interpreted and applied in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where it is clearly shown that the Gospel was preached to them as well as unto us.

Thus the law was a shadow of good things to come; a system of signs prepared by God to prefigure the

atonement of Christ. These sacrifices had an inferior efficacy, foreshowing by a legal purification, the greater efficacy of the antitype. The shadow had an appointed relation to the substance, the sketch to the picture. The doctrine is distinctly declared by the last-mentioned type; "the Holy Ghost" thereby "signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest;" the whole transaction being "a figure for the time then present." The great facts of the Gospel were seen under the law, especially the necessity of a moral purification by an atoning sacrifice.

Fifthly, the Lamb slain is especially seen in THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

"When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." (Gal. iv. 4, 5.) This was the point towards which all the lines of past dispensations converged: "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." All the reasons for what to us appears a long delay before the manifestation of Christ, are not revealed; but the inefficacy of reason, of human laws, of moral means, was thus made apparent. The world was weary of false guides, and physicians of no value. "The whole creation groaned and travailed in pain," until the Desire of all Nations should come. His prophetic work was important, but could have been accomplished by other means: His sacrifice was the great end of His incarnation. Because man was a sinner, and helpless, and ruined, he needed a Mediator. The religion of an

unsinning being would no longer suit him. He was guilty, and needed an atonement; and no atonement was adequate but the satisfaction to the government of God which Christ should offer. HE is "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

He, as the Antitype, is superior to all the types of previous dispensations, in His *nature*. "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one" nature. Formerly, they were of an immensely inferior nature; creatures not under a moral law, and not capable of honouring, or recognizing it. But He was truly man, "made of a woman, made under the law," "made like unto His brethren." He therefore could give the whole transaction a true moral aspect, could give it its true relation to the moral government of God. "He magnified the law, and made it honourable." Perfectly obeying it, He declared it to be the proper law for human nature, "holy and just and good." He thus vindicated its curse, as avoidable and righteous. But He showed that the law had no claim upon Him, for He never at any time transgressed His Father's law; His miraculous conception freeing Him from all hereditary defilement and imputative guilt; and His perfect obedience rendering Him free from all obligation to punishment. Thus the doctrine of the law was illustrated in fact,—the death of innocent creatures exempting from death those who were really criminal. God hath made Him Who knew no sin to be sin,—a sin-offering for us. He therefore was substituted for us. He died, not merely for our benefit, but *in our* room and stead, He being the direct and only

cause why the guilty are absolved from condemnation. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." The innocent Lamb is therefore put in the place of guilty man; thus giving His life "a ransom for many."

His sufferings and death thus appear to be a punishment for sin. He was cut off, not for His own sins, but for the sins of the people. The mysterious sufferings of the garden are only explicable on this ground. No outward occasion of suffering appears. He could not have less fortitude and bravery than His disciples, and they could often account their sufferings a recreation; and feeble women and tender children rejoiced in agonies. No physical suffering oppressed Him there, beyond that which mental sorrow and conflict imposed. But it was a cup of which He was drinking, and a baptism wherewith He was baptized, which had its solution in His deep apprehension of the Divine anger against sin; it was judicial wrath which was directed against Him as our Substitute. "Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts." (Zechariah xiii. 7.) "He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

The whole stress of the doctrine of redemption is in the *sufferings* of Christ,—His suffering unto death. We are "redeemed to God by His blood." We are "justified by His blood." Indeed, the whole strain of Scripture illustrates this point. The Lamb *slain* is the sacrifice of atonement.

But the grand point is the *merit* of that death. It had moral merit, as the death of a holy man,—the only example of perfect conformity to the law of God which this earth has known, beyond the brief period of Adam's innocence. Christ had a virtuous dignity which gave value to all His sufferings. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled."

But an infinitely higher consideration lay in the essential dignity of His nature, as the Son of God,—"the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person;" "by whom also He made the worlds." "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." That *self* is as truly the Divine as the human nature: "Who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God." "In Whom we have redemption through His blood." "Who is the image of the invisible God." "For when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." The Scriptures constantly connect the Divinity of Christ, not only with the declaration of the love of God to us in not sparing His own proper Son; and with the love of Christ, Who "being found in fashion as a man, . . . became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" but especially do they connect the efficacy of His death with the infinite dignity of His person.

Thus hath Christ reconciled us unto God, redeemed us by His own blood, saved us from wrath, and obtained eternal redemption for us. All the mercy designed in the eternal counsel of God, and foreshadowed in the early promises of mercy, and expressed in the symbolic

actions of the ancient sacrifices, and assured by the mouth of holy prophets, and needed by guilty, corrupt, and ruined man, *all* is realized in the fact of Christ's crucifixion. The prospective scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary shed a pale ray of hope across the darkness which first afflicted our world, and led our first parents to hope and trust in God. The seminal vigour of the first promise of mercy was derived from an event for which the world waited four thousand years. The perpetual sacrifices which were offered, told a guilty world of the true Atonement which should for ever put away sin. The fire which consumed these offerings, and ever said, "Give, give," was but the anticipation of that fire which lighted on the Divine Victim, and only then met with its full satisfaction. The long line of prophets who continually offered a doctrinal comment on the patriarchal and Levitical services, and kept up "the testimony of Jesus" by showing forth the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, acknowledged their mission to be fulfilled, their roll complete. All the patriarchs and prophets and priests, of former dispensations, with an innumerable company of angels, gathered upon that holy spot, and pressed around that bloody tree, to witness the consummation of the ages, to seal up the testimony, to burn out their incense, to abolish their sacrifices; to see the shadows vanish, the veil rent in twain, the true holy of holies entered by Him Who was both Victim and Priest, and Who entered by His own blood; all, all who had ever ministered, and taught, and sung prophetic strains, and interceded, and carried Urim

and Thummim, and heard the oracle, and beheld the Shechinah, and blessed the people,—all hovered and pressed to witness the decease which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem. The hour of dread conflict was past; the wine-press had been trodden, for an angel strengthened Him, and the Great Victim was again revived for the final conflict. The last indignity had been put upon Creation's Lord, and Heaven's King. The hours wore heavily along,—and at length brought Him to His cross. All things were being fulfilled; His very raiment had been cast lots for. His final thirst had now its bitter mockery. Nature was yielding her last tribute to Nature's Lord. The moment came when the dread words, heard first in the silence of a past eternity, should be uttered; and He bowed His head, and said, "IT IS FINISHED." The law is magnified; righteousness is declared; God is propitiated; guilt is atoned; sin is pardoned; holiness is purchased; Satan is dethroned; the world is overcome; death is vanquished; hell is subdued; Paradise is regained; man is redeemed; heaven is peopled; angels are doubly blest; and God is glorified in "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

SERMON XIII.—MEMORIES OF THE WAY.

"Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no."—Deuteronomy viii. 2.

THE study of Divine Providence forms a greater part of religion than is generally supposed; and is capable of improving the heart beyond any other subject not immediately derived from the peculiarities of the gospel. The two great teachers, Moses and Christ, are frequent in their use of this subject. Facts in the kingdom of nature, and passing events, are made the occasion of awakening attention, and the vehicle of conveying highly important truths.

The recorded history of the Israelites has furnished some of the most convincing arguments and impressive illustrations of Providence. Indeed, their history seems to bear the same similitude to the general dispensations of God towards the Church, which the dispensation of the law bears to the gospel. The provisions, laws, and blessings of the evangelical covenant were known under the Mosaic economy; but they were exhibited under enigmas, in shadows, under a veil. Yet each supports

and illustrates the other: the Old Testament establishes the docrines of the New; the New Testament sheds its effulgence upon the Old. The principles declared and developed in the Word of God, in the same manner, throw light upon the dispensations of Providence. What we perceive obscurely in the state of the world, or gather by careful induction, we have explicitly announced in that "sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well that we take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." Revelation finds support, or evidence, in the arrangements of Providence: the key-principles of Providence are given in the book of Revelation. By our individual experience we may become possessed of a kind of proof by no means unimportant, of the truth of that volume in which He Who governs condescends to give us some invaluable information on the nature and principles of His government; and declares "the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

Moses, having brought the Israelites to the borders of Canaan, under Divine direction now recapitulates the history of their forty years' wanderings; their deliverances, mercies, and ingratitude; their disobedience and punishments. He reminds them also, that the design of God's dispensations was precisely the same as that of the publication of His commandments: "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee," etc.

Our text develops the principle, that Divine Providence is a moral discipline. "The Lord thy God led

thee;" here is a distinct recognition of Divine Providence: "to humble thee, and to prove thee;" here is as distinct an avowal of a moral purpose.

By Providence, we understand God's most wise and gracious preservation and government of all His creatures; a superintendence which regards the most minute circumstance of human life especially; directly bestowing every good; permitting every evil; and constantly overruling natural evils for moral good; and this without interfering with the natures of the respective agents, but leaving the distinguishing characteristics of each entire and inviolate.

The doctrine of a particular Providence is a most necessary and fundamental truth of religion; "a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort." The notion of a God without a providence is irrational and absurd. All things speak for God, and His immediate operation. Even motion itself is no attribute of matter, but is impressed upon it from without; so that whatever moves, demonstrates the presence and power of God as the first great Mover. All second causes and laws of nature, as they are termed, are but modes or instruments of Divine operation; intermediate links between us and God. The whole chain of causes must centre in Him; and the whole system depend on Him, the only independent Cause. Thus, by an exact and suitable arrangement of second causes, God provides for the wants of all His creatures. "In Him we live and move and have our being." He leaves "not Himself without witness, in that He doeth good, and giveth us rain from

heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." "The eyes of all wait upon Thee; and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."

Nor may we here admit that voluntary humility, and seeming honour, but real dishonour, to God,—the supposition that many of the events of life are too mean and worthless to be deserving of the Divine regard. His providence takes a sweep as ample as His creating power, and a superintendence as minute as His omniscience. If He is the Lord and Giver of life, the smallest animalcule subsists and finds its enjoyment only by the constant operation of His providence. That which was not too insignificant for Him to create, it cannot be beneath His condescension to care for. The whole is but the assemblage of parts: and, however minute the parts, their great number makes them of great consequence; and the whole can only be cared for by watching over the component parts. Nothing can be too insignificant to be matter of Divine regard, which affects the happiness and moral well-being of man: and who can say how small a circumstance may give a new turn to events, which shall give a new turn to character, and affect our everlasting destiny? Who then shall presume to say what circumstances are great or small in connection with others and with eternity? Not to observe that the history of the Israelites, as all other history, marks a particular superintendence, it is enough to reply in the language of our Lord, "The hairs of

your head are all numbered." This declaration cements all facts into a beautiful and lofty pile of demonstration, which defies all the opposition of faithless philosophy. He Who is at the head of Providence offers this illustration of its particularity: "The hairs of your head are all numbered."

Brethren, willing or unwilling, we are all witnesses to this doctrine. Every man, whether he has sought it or not, has experienced or observed events over which no human being could have control, and which could not, by a pagan and too natural philosophy, be resolved into chance, fate, or accident, since there has been a manifest design and intelligence in the connection of means with an end. Who of us has not had passages in life, which, however we may have obliterated first impressions, at the time compelled the acknowledgment of a particular Providence?

Providence is not to be regarded as a distinct system, but as an auxiliary part of the scheme of redeeming mercy. The whole is now necessarily restorative. Herein it differs from the dispensation established in Eden. While man continued sinless, Providence was a simple continuance of unmingled blessing. There was then no curse. Earth had then felt no wound; had suffered no blight. There were then no elemental wars. The human body was not stricken with disease; it could not bend with age. Man's mind was not yet ignorant and wayward, the sport of circumstance and temptation. His soul was not yet vicious and rebellious, and needed not the restraint of afflictions. These evils

and dangers resulted from the fall; and then it became needful, if God would save man, to establish a new system of Providence. Evils are now to be watched and provided for, to be repelled or meliorated. Man's viciousness must be restrained, and often punished, His thoughtlessness must be roused; and those religious considerations which he would uniformly spurn with disgust, must frequently be forced upon him as salutary and necessary. Thus the purpose of God to redeem and save man, is made the basis of the present providential administration. The great truth now made prominent, is, that God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

Two views may be taken of the Divine conduct towards the Israelites, as stated in our text. First, as A LARGE EXPERIMENT UPON HUMAN NATURE; and, secondly, as AN ILLUSTRATION OF GOD'S DESIGNS TOWARDS HIS PEOPLE.

I. Let us regard the text as indicating A LARGE EXPERIMENT UPON HUMAN NATURE, and as illustrating the MORALITY OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

The Israelites were separated from the rest of the human family by many peculiarities; but, although kept politically distinct from other nations and families, they had the same moral nature, and the same accountability, with the rest of mankind. They were derived from the same common parent, and inherited the same enmity against God, the same supreme attachment to earthly good, the same resting in outward obedience, and the same proud spirit of self-complacency, self-righteousness,

and self-sufficiency. Their political probation in the wilderness under a direct theocracy, adumbrates that probation under which all mankind are placed. They had instruction, trial, difficulty, and danger; and reward and punishment. Nothing impracticable was required of them; nothing was enjoined which did not directly tend to their true and best interests. Their happiness was chiefly placed in their own power. "But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness..... Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that assuredly standeth, take heed lest he fall."

There can be little doubt that all rational beings are placed upon probation. No moral agents, how excellent soever their natural powers, are on that account worthy to be admitted to everlasting happiness. Of the only two orders of intelligent beings of whom we know anything, we learn that they have had a season of trial. Many of the angels "kept not their first estate;" others "do continually behold the face of our Father in heaven." Adam had his trial. Two trees were placed in the garden for instruction and religious meditation; the tree of life, as a pledge and an assurance that he should be happy while he obeyed; and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,—of good connected with evil, of pernicious enjoyment, of destructive gratification,—to teach him that unlawful enjoyment would be his ruin. Our blessed Redeemer, Whom it behoved to be made in all things

like unto His brethren, as man, was "made under the law," was "tempted of the devil," and did not His "own will, but the will of Him that sent Him." Under circumstances suited to our deteriorated nature and a covenant of grace, all men are upon trial. All are strangers and pilgrims, labourers, servants. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." It is important to remember that our trial runs parallel with our lives. Nor is it of consequence what, or how small, is the test of obedience. The question is that of principle. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." Every condition and every possession is accompanied with its peculiar temptation; and every individual must needs have a peculiar mode of trial. Every moment, every event, serves to affect our character, and in some point to prove us, whether we "will keep His commandments, or no." He who has set His heart upon us, "visits us every morning, and tries us every moment."

Let us take two or three illustrations of our principle in reference to mankind at large.

The moral ends of Providence are manifested.

1. In overruling the curse pronounced at the fall of man.

That sterility of the ground which obliges man in the sweat of his face to eat bread, wards off innumerable diseases, increases mental vigour, and is a powerful help to the formation of moral and religious habits. Some

have rendered the passage, "Cursed is the ground for thy *work:*" (Gen. iii. 17:) "I have cursed the ground for thy labour; or idleness and viciousness would destroy thee." Physical and mental labour are now good for man. In the climates which most abound with temporal delights, the period of life is shortest, and its tenure most uncertain. In the temperate zones, notwithstanding their additional labour, mankind are, on the whole, much more happy, because less indolent and degenerate than in the torrid zone, where the earth yields her increase almost spontaneously. Since the imaginations of man's heart have become evil, and his passions violent and headstrong, but for labour he would make the world one vast field of blood. But now death is delayed, and opportunities of seeking the mercy of God are multiplied.

Affliction, pain, and all the various ills that flesh is heir to, are the means of bringing men to their right mind, of showing them the vanity of earthly things, and of developing and maturing moral virtues and Christian graces. How few would regard their spiritual destitution but for this discipline! How effectually do disease and pain break down our tenaciousness of life, and reconcile us to a separation from our friends!

Even death itself is made a moral blessing. Its terrors lead men to seek Christ, and a preparation for heaven; its uncertainty induces watchfulness; and thus it becomes a standing argument for devotedness to God.

Every part of the curse upon our world, everything which renders turbid and bitter the streams of earthly pleasure, serves to direct us to that "pure river of water

of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."

2. There is a moral lesson in the present usual consequences of vice and virtue.

In giving laws to Israel, God required the whole heart: in punishing iniquity as King of Israel, He only visited for outward transgression, because men knew only the external act; and the full knowledge of the heart belonged to God alone, not as King of Israel, but as Judge of all. So, in the present life, many actions of doubtful morality, as it respects their secret springs, may yet be succeeded here with prosperity, while for their hypocrisy the agents may be punished when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. Amid the frequent oppressions of virtue, and the temporary success of vice, there is, nevertheless, a retribution in this life. The vices which are most injurious to society bring poverty and shame, hunger and rags, upon the vicious; the virtues which are most conducive to the welfare of society are most favourable to the temporal welfare of individuals. Filthiness of the flesh usually has its fit punishment in the infirmities and diseases of the flesh; filthiness of the spirit, its appropriate penal visitation in the anxieties, disappointments, and vexations of the spirit. The largest amount of temporal misery may be traced to idleness, indecision, improvidence, and transgression. And "neglects from inconsiderateness, want of attention, not looking about us to see what we have to do, are often attended with consequences altogether as dreadful, as from any active misbehaviour from the

most extravagant passion." The consequences tread upon the heels of the fault; and indeed vice generally becomes its own punishment. The observed connection marks the retribution of Providence; and he who sins in view of such general consequences, justly deserves the punishment. Disregarded checks and admonitions are followed by pungent but vain remorse, and aggravated judgment. By the same constitution of our nature, "he that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." "For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of My counsel: they despised all My reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." (Prov. i. 29—31.)

Thus plainly does Providence instruct men to "cease to do evil," and "learn to do well." Its arrangements furnish *primâ facie* evidence that virtuous actions are pleasing, and vicious ones displeasing, to God; that a scheme of moral government is begun; and that, from the imperfect conceptions of our own minds, the short duration of human life, the inadequacy of earthly things for full retribution, and the essential nature of probation, the full results of human actions must be reserved to a future state. All these impressions increase in vividness and force the more we study the course of Providence, and the constitution of our own minds. The capacity of reflecting upon the consequences of our actions; the facts of experience, that desire or aversion may be moderated, subdued, or changed by considering the

known consequences of gratification or mortification,—declare the rewardableness of human actions. The sense of shame, which God has mysteriously diffused in blushes over the countenance, marks the fluctuation of moral feeling, and a conscious regard to the principles of vice and virtue. The disturbance arising from vicious actions, or moral negligences, is a painful conviction of their being faulty and blameworthy; and the fear of condign punishment, is, in itself, no inconsiderable punishment. Fear creates precaution; and that precaution, formed into habit, is our safety. The serenity and peace which flow from virtuous actions and designs, and from the exercise of benevolent affections, are a testimony to their goodness and acceptableness. All these are arrangements which proclaim moral purposes to be the ultimate design of our present discipline and trial. All earthly good is vain, illusory, and unsubstantial; every evil passion is made a constant source of misery; and were these not remedial, and thus attended with hope, man would have awaked from the dream of this life, to the venom of despair which would admit no remedy. "Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living."

3. Observe also, the encouragements which Providence furnishes to seek pardon at the hand of God.

We are sinners, and have forfeited every blessing and enjoyment but such things as are essential to us as accountable beings,—necessary to endow us with that responsibility in which the law of God contemplates us.

Nevertheless, God continues to us innumerable forfeited blessings; and their continued bestowment, notwithstanding that they are abused, and converted into occasions of unthankfulness, or weapons of rebellion, marks a goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering, admirably calculated to "lead men to repentance." That reformation should so frequently avert the temporal consequences of sin, and bring the usual temporal rewards of virtue, affords a strong presumption of the Divine placability, and of the existence of some atonement and compensation to His injured government, through which God can be thus gracious to man. It confirms Scripture doctrines and declarations by the evidence of daily facts in the Divine conduct. "All things are of God, Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ." Thus is manifested "the affecting activity of the Divine compassion." It goeth into the wilderness to seek and recall His lost sheep; "and when He hath found it, He layeth it on His shoulders, rejoicing."

And there is severity as well as goodness: both teach the same lessons, and work the same end. Severity manifested towards sinful creatures during probation is mercy in disguise. It appeals to the fears of man, and declares that God will in no wise spare the guilty and finally impenitent. It is love which strikes the blow when a sinner is overtaken in the midst of his pleasures and fancied security, cast upon a bed of affliction, brought to the margin of the grave, terrified by the prospect of "utterly perishing in his own corruption," and then

raised, almost from the dead, that he may "recover strength" before he goes "hence."

Such is the general aspect of Providence towards sinful man. These are moral benefits of which all are partakers. Our common mercies are religious monitors. Every pain, and affliction, and disappointment is fraught with moral lessons. We are continually checked in a course of sin; the road is rendered rough, thorny, painful,—all but impassable. God has long patience with us. He importunes us by His Spirit, while He aids us by circumstances; and both without impinging on our free-agency. When the prodigal "was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

But there is something more special in the doctrine of our text, and we proceed to notice,

II. THE PARTICULAR ENDS OF GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL DISPENSATIONS TOWARDS THE CHURCH.

If, as we trust has been shown, Providence is eminently moral in its purposes; is part of a remedial scheme; and is necessarily founded on the Divine purpose through Christ to save man, the designs of God in His conduct to His people must be eminently holy. "Thou shalt consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to fear Him."

1. Since humility is the proper counter-working of the fall, the first design named by Moses is "to humble thee."

Pride is the master-sin of our nature; it is of the essence of all sin; its language is, "I will be like the Most High." It spurns the restraints and authority of the Supreme Lawgiver; it dissolves the ties of man to his fellow; destroys every kindly feeling; and enervates all efforts in behalf of others: it is an evil fountain, which sends forth the bitter streams of ingratitude, covetousness, bigotry, and every evil passion: it is the false fire which dances before us to allure us into the pit: it is a leprosy which overspreads us entirely, and pollutes all we touch: it is a desperation which makes us shut our eyes, and recklessly rush upon our ruin. No wonder, therefore, that Christ should first require of His disciples a childlike teachableness, a learning of Him chiefly in this, that He was "meek and lowly in heart;" and that the first lesson of Providence is a lesson of humiliation and abasement.

There appear to be three principal methods by which God in His Providence humbles us.

(1.) He prevents the occasions of pride. Thus was it with the Israelites: they dwelt in tents, they had no inheritance, they were fed with manna, their raiment waxed not old for forty years. God made them subsist as a separated people, wholly dependent on His Providence for their daily supplies; they wandered in a barren, inhospitable, and dangerous wilderness at His direction and bidding. These were preparations for times of subsequent prosperity; these were lessons of humility, that when they ate and were full, and had built goodly houses, and all that they had was multi-

plied, their hearts might not be lifted up, that they might not forget the Lord their God.

And thus does God still deal with His people. He humbles us by rendering futile all schemes which are without His counsel, and are not fostered by His blessing; by reducing us to extremity, and sending relief by unexpected and despicable means; by accomplishing for us the most stupendous designs without our concurrence or knowledge, and by means at once simple, weak, and unpromising; and by keeping us in constant dependence upon Him for our most common and necessary things. That which we are most solicitous to obtain, for which we scheme and labour and endure sacrifices, which we pray for, and would almost wrest from the hand of God, is the very thing which of all others would be most apt to inflate us with pride and vanity. Why does not He who delights in our true happiness, bestow the blessing we so passionately desire? Is it not for our trial? Is it not to teach us humility? Is it not because He sees we could not bear it? How many of our disappointments in life may this purpose of humbling us explain!

(2.) God removes the occasions of pride. Often when we first receive a good, we are disposed to be humble in the possession, use, and enjoyment of it; after awhile we rejoice as if we had not received it: then it becomes necessary to remove it.

Are we proud of an unstained reputation, having the conviction of our own integrity? Do we cease to give glory to God for the grace whereby we have been kept

from sin? How often does our pride here receive a wound which we carry all the days of our life! How often is some Shimei permitted to curse us, and make us vile in the eyes of others! Our enemies may not speak the truth; but we may be painfully reminded of what is the truth. In our best actions we may have the worst motives imputed to us. The breath of envy and slander may blacken what it cannot consume. We may soon discover how proud we were of our character, by our poignant sufferings under false aspersions.

Are we proud of our health, and strength, and flow of spirits? Do we affect to pity, but, in reality, despise, the weak and unhealthy as melancholy, unsocial creatures? Or do we exult in our mental superiority? How soon is all occasion of boasting removed! A slight affliction, the touching of God's hand, brings the strong man low; makes him as a little child, peevish and miserable, the sport of every trifle; melancholy, without mental vigour, and without the comfort of hope.

Are we too much elated in a numerous circle of intelligent, affectionate, pious friends? How soon is a cloud brought over the domestic circle, and a swift-winged messenger strikes our choicest friend with lightning-force; the world becomes a wilderness, and we are written solitary: or, after being nourished in our bosom, they are alienated, become venomous, and fasten upon our vitals.

Are we proud of our possessions, houses, furniture, trade? Do we accumulate profits only to spend them on the ingenious devices of our own lusts? Do we

multiply our wants in proportion to our possessions, and find it easier to be content with a little than with much wealth? This is our pride; and "a man's pride shall bring him low." Trace out the adversities of most men who once possessed wealth, and generally you will find that the above solution of their case is the true one. This especially applies to religious men, who have entered into speculations which could not be warranted either by Christian principle, or their means of business. They have spread a religious veil over their covetousness, by the pretence of giving more largely to the cause of God; but their charities were contingent on success in their enterprises, and God hath said, "I hate robbery for burnt offering." Generally, where men consecrate their wealth to God, by doing good instead of consuming it upon their lusts, they succeed in business: when they cease to proportion their beneficence to their profits, their increase is their danger; they are nigh unto cursing; "the pride of their heart hath deceived them," and "a deceived heart hath turned them aside."

In a word, brethren, we soon lose any worldly pleasure in which we take excessive delight; we soon prove the weakness of that earthly stay on which we greatly lean; we soon find mortification in that temporal possession of which we are accustomed to make our boast.

"He builds too low who builds below the skies;"

and when we are making our nest of earthly good, and saying, "Here is my rest," it is needful that God should

tear away those comforts, that we may fly away towards heaven. "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him."

(3.) God balances the occasions of pride. To remove every thing to which our subtle pride attaches itself, would be to strip us of all; and even in our last extremity we should probably be proud of what is called an independent spirit; proud of that pride which no discipline could correct. This tendency must therefore be continually checked.

The various occasions of pride are variously balanced. One man has wealth; but those very possessions have produced a rank luxuriance of artificial wants, which have choked the healthful pleasures of domestic life. Another has an unblemished reputation, but this is balanced by the poverty of his circumstances. A third possesses a clear, enlarged, lofty mind, vigorous and original; but he is oppressed in his loftiest flights by an inadequate, infirm body; and this checks his boasting.

Even in religious matters there is the same tendency to a proud self-complacency. We boast of belonging to the only true Church; we pride ourselves in her ministers and ordinances; we plume ourselves on the gifts we possess; we are proud of our attainments in grace. How soon does God snap asunder the polished shaft, and carry on His glorious work by very inferior means!

This balancing of dispensations is apparent in many facts, to which our individual experience will easily find

parallels. Do we secretly boast of power in pleading with God? Look at Jacob wrestling with the angel: he prevails; his name shall no more be called Jacob, a supplanter, but Israel, a prince, a prevailer with God. But the angel "touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank," and ever after "he halted upon his thigh."

Do we boast of our courage in the cause of Christ? Look at Peter: "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death." When his Master was taken, and his passions were touched, "Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear." Yet this same Peter, when challenged as a disciple, "began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man;" and he had ever after the lesson of humility in the blushing remembrance of his cowardice.

Do we cherish a secret self-complacency, as if we were the special favourites of heaven, because of abundant revelations of the grace and glory of God? Do we find it difficult to bear with the weak in grace, and not to think highly of ourselves in comparison of others? Look at St. Paul: "Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure."

Yes; the Lord can soon cut off those things which Satan tempts us, in the pride of our hearts, to number boastingly. He can soon remind us that "it is He that giveth us power to get wealth;" and that "by grace we

are saved, through faith." He can soon "burn and grind" the object of our idolatry, and make us drink the draught of disappointed ambition and remembered folly and sin.

2. A second great object of the discipline of Providence over the Church is here specified: "to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no."

Not that the principles and fluctuating feelings of the heart are not fully known to God, but that we know not our own hearts. Next to the direct teaching of the Holy Ghost, nothing so effectually develops the deceitfulness and iniquity of the heart, as that change of circumstances which calls forth latent energies, unveils deceptions, and makes our principles distinct and prominent. God needs not this experiment to be informed of the effect of any combination or modification of Divine, satanic, and human agency. He knows all possibilities of free-agency. That is a remarkable passage in Jeremiah: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."

It belongs essentially to probation that we should be proved. Something must ever be left as a test of the loyalty of the heart. The whole ceremonial law was a proving of the heart of the Israelites: it was a test of their confidence in God, of their simple submission to unexplained law, and of their abhorrence of

idolatry. Most of the peculiar rites imposed upon them were given in direct opposition to the practices of surrounding heathen nations; those things being accounted profane by the Hebrews which were sacred among the heathens; and *vice versâ*. God intended them to be the executioners of His just judgment upon the Canaanites; their slavery had unmanned them, and they were unfitted for that difficult service; He therefore disciplined and proved them in the wilderness, that they might become His avengers upon the idolaters.

And we need to be proved. Our hearts continually deceive us. There is no good which may not be counterfeited; but real grace, like the precious metals, will bear the test. The Lord "shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." He heaps the fuel of affliction, and increases the heat to an intensity which threatens to consume rather than to purify. Yet He sits by, and watches the process: and as the refiner is satisfied when he can see his face distinctly on the surface of the fluid silver; so the Lord is well-pleased when He hath thus "turned His hand upon them, and purely purged away their dross, and taken away all their tin."

"He looks and loves His image there."

He then withdraws the fuel, slackens the fire, and whispers to the molten soul, all bright with "a glorified joy," "There is need that, 'for a season,' ye be 'in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your

faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.'"

How continually are the faith and patience of God's people proved! Some, having few special trials, imagine they have great confidence in God, and perfect submission to His will; and God then permits them to be exercised. Sometimes He delays an answer to their prayers; for a season withholds the mercies He has promised; gives no reason for His dispensations; or spreads a death upon the promise by making His Providence apparently to contradict His word. The success of an enterprise, "sanctified by the word of God and prayer," is blighted; the ample exercise and lofty manifestation of those principles which God most highly approves, bring upon us some of our greatest troubles; or imputations are thrown upon the motives and principles of those actions which, in the matter of them, our enemies acknowledge to be unblamable, and in which we have "the answer of a good conscience toward God."

Every day offers a test to some part of our character. Some duty is required which is painful to our feelings, or disadvantageous to our temporal interests; or we are placed in such circumstances that our precise duty is involved in considerable obscurity, and requires patient thought, and a conscientious balancing of reasons and scrutiny of motives. Thus God proves what value we set on acts of obedience, as such;

and shows us, that our virtue is to be estimated by the amount of temptation, and the difficulties of obedience. Thus "gold is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity." Look at Abraham. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." His faith sustained the trial; he cast himself upon the Providence of God for guidance, for protection, for another habitation and another home. When in the land which it was repeatedly promised that he should possess, he did not possess it; but "by faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." But he lived as a stranger and pilgrim, answering the end of the dispensation; for he kept up a spiritual hope; "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." And then, the faith which had been increasing in vigour by these exercises, and the delayed fulfilment of the promise of a son in his old age, was now to have one grand trial; proportioned, as were the former, to his increased faith. He must offer, as a sacrifice to God, without any declared reason beyond the bare command, the son of his old age; the Isaac, the son of joy, "less beloved than God alone;" in whom were bound up the promises of God, and the hopes of the Church. "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac."

Look at Joseph. Because he would preserve a conscience undefiled, he had to pass through the most mysterious

dispensations that ever man was called to experience. Look at Job. He was reduced to the necessity of simply making his appeal to God: "He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held His steps; His way have I kept, and not declined."

But there are also special occasions of proving us. God sometimes greatly changes our circumstances, to expose some new delusion of our hearts. We have perhaps made a boast of our attachment to the cause of Christ, and have been very laborious in the work of God. We have thought all was from loving zeal, a single devotedness to the interests of religion. We have suddenly been deprived of some of our helpers; or have had to endure opposition or coolness where we had expected the countenance of some in the Church. We have had to suffer reproach for our ardour; and we now find there was much vanity, much party spirit, much valueless excitement, mingled with our zeal. We have now discovered, that if there be no food for our self-complacency, no stimulus to what is merely human; if the success be not evident, both to ourselves and others; and if we are left to work merely from the force of principle;—we have no room to boast of the genuineness or vigour of our loving zeal.

Or perhaps we have freely denounced certain practices as contrary to the religion of Christ: we have fully expounded Gospel precepts, and traced the ramifications of Scripture principles, to prove the discrepancies of religious professors; and have at once presumed that our

clear knowledge of and zeal for the law were tantamount to a hearty love of it. Presently our circumstances have been so changed as to bring us directly under the operation of the rule or principle we have so *ably* explained and applied. We first feel a surprise and a sort of inward blushing; then a regret that we have so committed ourselves; then a dislike to the law which now so painfully presses upon us; and then we proceed to explain it away, or at least so to modify our former construction of it, as greatly, in our own eyes at least, to extenuate our guilt. Thus doth God prove us, to know what is in our heart, whether we will keep His commandments, or no.

How often do the poor envy the rich their wealth, their leisure, their influence, their opportunities of doing good! How often do they labour, sigh, perhaps pray, for such possessions, with the deliberate purpose and full conviction that if they may but be intrusted with such talents, they will faithfully apply them! They are gradually prospered in business, or suddenly acquire a fortune; and they find that he only who is faithful in little will be faithful in much. New possessions have made as strong an appeal to nature as to grace; and the old desires make new and larger demands. They find that an increase of grace is by no means a certain concomitant of those new facilities for doing good, granted to prayers and resolutions, generally of a very questionable character.

Some Christians complain of certain hindrances to their piety in their present circumstances; and are *sure that* if this were removed, and that were granted,

they would make rapid progress in religion. Providence effects the change; and they find that the hindrances were not external, but internal; not in their circumstances, but in their hearts.

A man is cast upon a bed of affliction. Withdrawn from the bustle of the world, he has time for close self-examination. God comes down in the cool of the day, and talks with him. He sees great unfaithfulness. His soul is overwhelmed. While the pressure of affliction is upon him, he sees the world to be but "vanity and vexation of spirit;" and he vows himself to God as an entire, living sacrifice. But no sooner does the Lord remove His hand, than the world resumes its charms, and business its claims; and by the time he has fully recovered his health, his spirit has fully recovered its love to this present world. He more than ever needs the caution, "Take heed, regard not iniquity: for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction."

The young are hoping that mature age will prove more favourable to a decided and high-toned piety; and that they will then make one grand effort, and execute comprehensive schemes of practical godliness. They who have reached this period find new and unexpected difficulties; and they wait for the calm of advanced age, freedom from worldly business, family cares, and other distractions; and they hope that few difficulties will then impede their rapid preparation for heaven. But, each in his turn, they are all deceived. This is the folly of youth matured in old age; the vain expectation that in a future time the impulse of new circumstances will overcome the

opposition of a worldly mind, and afford unknown facilities for holiness.

The great truth which all this is calculated to impress, is, that if we are not now living for God with all the ardour of our souls; if we are not now keeping His commandments; if we are not now faithfully employing our one talent for God; there is no room to hope that any change of circumstances, any new facilities, any increase of talents, will find us more or equally faithful. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness; to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no."

Let us learn habitually to regard the Providence of God towards ourselves.

Without this we lose the advantage of Divine dispensations. This is moral; and must be wrought into our intellectual nature by our own consent and concurrence. The understanding, and memory, and will, and conscience, and affections, are concerned, and must be all engaged. By carefully marking the course of events, we shall become more grounded in the conviction that there is a Providence; that the world is not like a ship, the rudder of which is broken, its compass lost, and its pilot asleep; ever changing its course, but without any government or design. An observation of events will do more to rivet these truths, and to secure their moral benefit, than any process of reasoning; for facts reach *the heart* much more easily than doctrines. Yet indolent

habits of thought, and confined views, are unsuitable to this study. It is one of enlightened observation, and requires a patient tracking of events, a careful study of the under-current of our own feelings, and especially a supreme deference to those reasons of the Divine conduct which are laid down in the Bible. Let us then possess ourselves completely of these great principles. Let us look habitually on the government of men, and the control of events in our own lives, as we are accustomed to look at the mundane system, in the full conviction that all is orderly and beautiful to the eye of the great Ruler; and that, were the simple and effectual laws of the moral government of God more clearly revealed to us, we should, with a deeper conviction and a more sublime feeling, "sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest."

Let us rejoice that the circumstances of our trial are all adjusted by infinite wisdom and goodness.

Our trials might otherwise be too great for us; or assistance might be so far beyond actual necessity, as to impinge our free-agency, or at least to lessen the evangelical rewardableness of our actions. No finite intelligence could adjust our trial. We know not our own spirits; their powers; what is just now suitable to them;

how they are affected by the pressure of the corruptible body; what are the stratagems and force, now, or to be, employed by our invisible foes; what is the influence of example; what would be the result of certain alterations in the direction or power of these moral forces, which, undoubtedly, are as certain and regular in their effects, to the eye of God, as those we term forces and laws of nature. Nor do we know what are to be the high destinies and associations of our species, or of ourselves as individuals, in the future world. "Who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?"

None but God can tell "what is good for man in this life," taken in all its vast circumference of present circumstances, and interests, and influences; or best for his particular destination in the glorious employments of immortality. He who formed the heart "knoweth the secrets of the heart." He will not allow too severe an exercise of our grace. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man;" such as belongs to your nature and situation; such as is vincible, if you are resolved. The Lord will not permit a trial which is only suitable to unfallen and superior intelligences, and quite unsuitable and insurmountable to us. He will accurately balance our trial and our help, so that it shall not be too violent for our impaired nature, and yet shall put our graces sufficiently to the proof. And He will make a way of escape out of every temptation. He will send us counsel by a friend, or direct us

to a book, or give a new turn to events, or open an unexpected door, or gently influence us by the suggestions or comforts of His Spirit, just at the right moment, and in the best way.

Let us then make Him our Friend. Let us fully accept of Christ as a Saviour from sin. Let us yield up ourselves to be the temple of His Spirit. Let us cultivate a holy familiarity with Him in prayer. "Prayer honours Providence, and Providence honours prayer." In every distress, temptation, emergency, let us run to Him as "the Father of our spirits." "I will cry unto God Most High; unto God that performeth all things for me."

Let us wait with patience, and in the exercise of faith, for the full development of the system of Providence in heaven.

Here we can only "know in part, and prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." In this state of probation we are trained; a right direction is given to our intellectual and moral powers. We shall soon be transplanted to a more genial soil. The bud shall burst forth, and expand into beauty and brightness, and exhale a most grateful odour under the unclouded effulgence of the Sun of Righteousness. This is but the childhood of our whole existence. Here, the man is beyond expression thankful for that discipline of childhood and youth which was painful, and barely submitted to. He now acknowledges the wisdom and mercy of the dispensation, and recompenses his parents by a virtuous man-

hood, or embalms their memory in tears of grateful love. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I reasoned as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." In heaven, our erroneous views shall be corrected, our limited conceptions enlarged. Enjoying the result of our trial and chastisement, we shall have right views of the means employed. We shall then see how acts of self-denial tend to improve our nature; how the exercise of the principle of benevolence in labour and sacrifice serves to destroy the principle of selfishness; how the love of the brethren fits us for the society of redeemed spirits in glory; and how those afflictions which are so painful in the endurance wean the mind from sensible objects, make us feel the vanity of the world, strengthen the vision of faith, and increase our weight of glory. "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

LECTURES.

LECTURE I.—THE FORCE OF EARLY HABIT.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,

YOU greatly differ from other youths if you have never felt dissatisfaction with your lot, at school especially, as an irksome state of submission and restraint, constantly thwarting your plans, and forbidding your pleasures. "Why am I, for several years, obliged to do what others prescribe; to follow in paths which I have not chosen for myself; to yield to others, rather than to form my own plans, and to follow the dictates of my own will?"

This restraint is imposed, more or less, upon every man in the earlier period of life; the period which the young most naturally think they may, and perhaps think they ought to, devote to pleasure. But this is the very time when discipline is most necessary; for let this period pass without the yoke, and, although some things may be redeemed, and some may be remedied, yet in the most important respects, much is lost for ever. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his *youth*." This yoke is not the badge of slavery, the sign of disgrace, but the token of honourable subjection,

and the means of securing immense advantages. This yoke is discipline, and the result is—good habits. In Scripture, a man's habits are spoken of as his "ways;" and the idea is of frequent occurrence. Thus, the "ways" of the wicked are "crooked," and they are "froward in their paths;" and, "when a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." A child must be trained up "in the way he should go."

Our topic and purpose require that we should consider some of the evil habits of which the young especially should be warned, and which older persons should earnestly strive to amend. Man is a bundle of habits; and these, not his occasional acts, form his character.

Some habits can scarcely be said to be moral, or intelligent, and yet they *distinguish* a man. Many are a sort of instinctive habits, performed almost wholly without thought, and established without purpose. Walking is at first an art, and then a habit. It is acquired with such difficulty, that Paley justly says, "a child learning to walk is the best posture-master in the world." But the *modes* of performing these instinctive and necessary acts are so different, that each person is distinguished by his modes. Some are ungraceful, some ridiculous, some injurious; and probably the actor is totally unconscious of anything improper, until some kind friend will be at the trouble and risk of pointing them out to him. The art of walking, the art of sitting, the art of general personal ease and propriety of behaviour, should be cultivated in early life, with assiduity and perseverance; for what hope is there when once a bad habit is confirmed?

There are other personal habits which are generally formed in early life, and which cleave to a man, without ever being reckoned either ornamental or useful. One cultivates a lock of hair, or an incipient whisker; another, his olfactory organ; a third, picks his teeth all day; and a fourth bites his finger ends, lest he should wear Nebuchadnezzar's claws. Then we have another set of most offensive and pernicious habits. Here is a gentleman who perpetually serves out a charge of powder to his nose, even in the presence of ladies; and here is another, whose vision is never clear but when he dwells in a cloud of narcotic smoke.

Then we have nervous habits. Such as a voluntary, or at least repressible movement of some muscle, until it becomes a habit, and an involuntary twitch; or, the twirling a cane, or a button, or a pencil-case. A youth has been known to lose a prize, because some waggish schoolfellow, or wicked rival, has cut off the button upon twisting which the whole success of his effort depended. Many require to fix their eye in a certain direction, and to put their hands in a peculiar position, in order to secure self-possession in public speaking.

There are other personal habits, that need only be alluded to. The habit of inattention—of asking to have everything said twice; of looking upon vacancy while you are spoken to; of breaking in upon another person's speech,—or, worse still, upon his reading to you; of restlessness and shuffling about—the non-medical St. Vitus's dance; of lazy, lolling, indifferent postures;

of contradicting or debating everything, off-hand, at once; of always being unconvincible; of always having a number of excuses ready, to ward off the suspicion of any possible blame; of continually postponing inevitable duty; of seeking perpetual change, so that nothing is suffered to grow;—these all indicate a weak and undisciplined mind.

There are many *moral* habits which are much to be deprecated. Some men cannot state the simplest fact without exaggeration. If the truth be given substantially, it is not given circumstantially. They cannot resist the temptation to make what they relate appear in *some* respects extraordinary,—unlike other men's narratives. It may be tolerably correct in the drawing, but it is sure to be excessive in the colouring; even if there be no nice little adjuncts and interjections, furnished from the portfolio of their imaginations. To be severely truthful would be too simple. All the while they forget how greatly they are undermining their own reputation; until at length they have the mortification and disgrace of finding out that all their stories have only a market value—a deduction being regularly made of so much per cent. from all they say:—"It is only what Mr. or Mrs. So-and-so says; there may be something in it; but we must wait, before we know what part to believe." A pretty habit to be known by! Such people carry on a great trade, but are ruined by discounts!

Not much more amiable, reputable, or profitable, is the habit of always making a great ado about purchases; always insisting upon abatements. Some people are

always comforting themselves with the notion that they have cheapened an article, and are first-rate at a bargain; chuckling as if they were commercially clever, and had performed a feat. I am told that when such customers are known,—and they are soon known,—it seldom makes any difference to the seller; that it soon becomes an easy thing to deal with men who luxuriate in abatements and discounts; and that the process is extremely simple. Here is the recipe, as given to me. If the article will please your customer better, first *put so much on*, and then, secondly, *take so much off;* and this embodiment of the live-and-let-live principle will go away rejoicing! "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth."

We have also a class of men habitually interlarding their conversation with oaths, or simulated oaths. If they do not swear outright and passionately, they seem to swear; or they deal in small oaths, and in what is a thin veil for profanity. They "dash it," at every turn; or swear by the creature instead of the Creator; and fill the ear with profane or unmeaning exclamations. This is offensive to every well-educated mind, and is a serious blot upon the character of those who thus evince a suspicion, that in making their assertions, at least a small oath is necessary for confirmation, and an end of strife.

But enough of these illustrations of evil habits. The question remains, how are evil habits to be cured, and good ones to be cultivated?

The young are our hope; they are not so rigid, nor

so rugged, nor so unfruitful, as your old stock. A worn-out soil will repay no cultivation. The giant arms of the gnarled oak cannot be bent into graceful festoons. The decayed roots of the vine cannot be revived into new fertility. Advanced age gives us little hope of amendment. But the next generation of men will be mainly what the young people now are. If frivolous, incapable of a sound judgment, idle, afraid of work, or latitudinarian in sentiment,—what an age shall we be the fathers of!

It is obvious, therefore, that no one can begin too soon to form his habits to virtue and truth. The whole purpose of *education* is comprised in the question now proposed. Education, strictly speaking, is as much directed to teaching what is right and wrong, and forming the character to true wisdom, as it is to teaching the difference between truth and error, and filling the mind with knowledge. Knowledge is not wisdom; and intellectual instruction will not substitute moral training; for the true, the scriptural idea of education, is that of *training* up a child in the way he should go, teaching and inducing him to walk in the right path.

The propriety and necessity of this state of pupilage and restraint is seen in the very nature of things. Man is not introduced into the world with mature faculties of body or mind. His infancy is a state of pitiable helplessness. For the food, and clothing, and care essential to the preservation of life, he is dependent upon others. All his senses need to be "exercised," disciplined, "to discern good and evil," to "distinguish things that

differ." Endowed with the high attribute of reason, his instincts are less perfect than those of other creatures. *Habits* have to be formed in man as a substitute for the more perfect direction of instinct in animals, in what is essential to life, and physical well-being. The great difference, however is, that inferior creatures, left to themselves, make no progress; and even domesticated animals can only reach a very inferior degree of perfection.

But man is capable of high and progressive improvement. By thought, reflection, and purpose, he can reap the benefits of preceding ages of experience. Antiquity, the youth of time, sends down lessons of knowledge and wisdom; and we enter at once on the advantages of a maturer age of the world. Your minds are capable of "large discourse, looking before and after." You have a moral faculty, a moral sense which induces responsibility. You are "called to virtue and glory."

But all you can ever be, in excellence of mind or morals, must be the result of study, of training, of discipline. You cannot at once leap to perfection in anything, physical, mental, or moral. Your attainments are not to be defined and limited; yet they must each and all result from slow and self-denying labour. And your ignorance and inexperience render it necessary that you should be taught by those who have trodden your path, and know by what process of cultivation, knowledge and virtue are most certainly and most largely secured.

The general ground of this necessity for early discipline

is further manifest in the evil bias of your nature. Moral restraint, moral helps, and moral training, are absolutely necessary to the production of goodness; for a depraved nature, untaught and unchecked, will only abound to more ungodliness, and wax worse and worse. An entire generation of untaught, undisciplined youth, would become intolerable; and education can only be considered as answering its design, when it enables youths better to discern between truth and error, and right and wrong; and forms them to the *habit* of preferring truth to error, and good to evil.

And, once more, the most solemn view of the general importance of our subject is found in the fact of your immortality, and your present state of probation. You are on trial. Every step of life tends towards an awful goal. The being now commenced you cannot terminate. The dread decision you cannot escape. Two eternities are before you for your choice,—eternal happiness, and eternal misery. One *must* be your portion. Sincerity and earnestness will certainly, through faith in the Almighty Saviour, secure your future blessedness; vice, unbelief, religious indifference, will as certainly involve you in irremediable woe. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Our subject is, therefore, "pregnant with all eternity can give." This life is the seed time of an eternal harvest. What we are here, we shall be hereafter. Our principles form our character; and our character will abide with us, and abide in us for ever.

And you must not imagine that these things are only

of a future and distant importance; that life will furnish abundant opportunities to remedy your early defects; and that the doctrines of grace will be a secure refuge from the consequences of present negligence and sin. It ought to be a sufficient remedy against this delusion, that life is frail and insecure; and that we cannot command the time or circumstances of our departure, so as to be sure of leisure for repentance, or even time for prayer. But, to say nothing at present of the rights of God, who, if He have any demand upon you, has the *first* demand; we still appeal to your true self-interest. Upon your early life depends the stability and usefulness of your mature age, and the calm tranquillity of your declining years. If your parents had neglected you in infancy, an infirm body had been your affliction and your snare. And if your discipline were now neglected, still greater evils would result to your mind and character.

The importance of our subject will appear more fully, if we endeavour to illustrate the efficacy of such discipline.

Our first illustration will be found in the lower part of creation. All animals are obviously fitted by their structure, and their instincts and habits, for some particular element and mode of life. "In wisdom hast Thou made them all." "Instinct is a faculty incapable of being improved by education. It operates without the force of example, without the instruction of parents, without the formation of habits." It thus guides animals infallibly in all that concerns their being, and their well-being, in a state of nature.

But it is a singular fact that as animals are brought under the care, and trained for the use of man, they lose more or less the faculty of instinct, and gain that of habit. Let any one watch the effect of a kind and persevering discipline upon creatures trained for the service of man, he will see them gradually renouncing their natural propensities, and conforming themselves to the most irksome changes; until they even derive high satisfaction from the performance of actions which are a sort of denial of their nature, and can only become pleasant from habit and recompense. Domesticated animals are taught to perform actions which nature has only rendered them capable of performing, but has not given them a propensity to perform. Thus the horse, the dog, the cow, and in warm latitudes, the elephant and camel, become so useful to man, as to be, in a sense, necessary to his existence, certainly to his comfort and progress.

But how could animals be formed to such uses without discipline and training? The young colt taken from the field would not submit at once to carry your burden, and would be incapable of understanding the guidance of the rein, and obeying the expressed wish of his master. But he is "broken in," and thus made fit for use. He is made to fear; but he is also gently taught, and induced to obey. His temper and propensities are considered, and the purposes and destiny of his future life; and he is *educated* accordingly. "A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's *back*." What is sought for in educating a dog for the

sports of the field, and a horse or an elephant for the use of man? To oppose, and restrain, and control natural propensities, and to make them obedient to man's will, as machines with some small degree of intelligence; to cure their evils, and to cultivate and perfect the good of which they are capable.

In the same sense, *we* need training and discipline; we need to be *broken in*, and prepared for the duties of life. And education is even more powerful upon us in early life, than upon the lower creatures, although they often exhibit extraordinary results from a long course of judicious discipline. For we must remember that discipline does not mean exclusively, or chiefly, the infliction of punishment; he is disciplined who is trained,—who is taught to do right by a wise appeal to the motives of fear and love—a judicious intermixture of praise and blame—of reward and punishment. It is a vulgar error to suppose that discipline implies no more than the "rod of correction." Although that may be useful and necessary, it will not do alone. We are disciplined by kindness and instruction, as really as by punishment and terror; by what is mental and moral more effectually than by what is physical and coercive.

In this light it is important to look upon the very commencement of life. A mother's influence in cleanliness, order, temper, management, are felt within the first few weeks of an infant's life. Her mode of hushing and soothing him begins even then to form his temper, and affect his future being. She soon teaches him to cry softly, and to sleep at his appointed time; and thus

makes an important advancement in putting the yoke upon him, and preparing for the next step of parental government. The character of the teacher is everything to the taught. Only those who have studied these things can conceive the importance of maternal self-government, and early nursery discipline. Unchecked infancy gives such strength to the passions, as makes childhood offensive to all but the parents, and a constant trouble to *them;* and every victory is in the nature of an assurance of future success to persevering rebellion. But, on the other hand, quiet, uniform government leads to willing and unconscious submission; until the will of the parent is habitually felt to be the only rule of the child. A gentle but firm control of even an infant, soon makes him conscious that he must submit; and although one or two instances of conflict may arise, wherein he struggles for the mastery, yet as many victories on the part of the parent, clear and decisive, usually suffice to settle such an unseemly and dangerous controversy.

The force of the discipline and habit of which we are speaking, is clearly seen in a well-regulated family; a family governed by *system*, because regulated by *principle.* The children are controllable because habitually controlled. Their conduct towards their parents is respectful and confiding, and towards each other affectionate and courteous. They are early taught to govern their tempers, and especially their words and actions; so that kindness, truthfulness, and an affectionate propriety, become the habit which it is unnecessary to modify. In such a family all evil is repressed; all good is fostered;

and all allowance is made for infirmity and natural lapses.

See again, the force of this education. Circumstances mould us more than precepts. Look at the tattered child of poverty and misfortune. He is not swathed and manacled with excess of clothing. He does not fear the inclemency of the seasons. The rain patters on the natural covering of his head; and the wind as freely plays over his entire person. He has his sorrows, but his heart, already so familiar with suffering, is yet light and firm; and he can cheerily dash away his tears with the rags upon his arm. What freedom of limbs! What muscular energy! What a spirit of daring! What resources! What endurance! And how is it! when a youth his superior in years, and abundantly his superior in artificial education, displays none of these traits? Simply because their education has differed. The one knows nothing of superfluities, of servants, of the anticipation of his wishes, of luxuries and enjoyments; and the other knows nothing of privation, of extremities, of dangers. The one is educated by being thoroughly cared for by others; the other is also educated, but it is by having to learn to care for himself. The rough, undisciplined child of nature, will exhibit many valuable traits of character, in courage, tact, and passive endurance, which we may admire; but the neglect of his moral training will leave the *animal* predominant, and render his vices gross, and fearfully repugnant.

A general conviction of the importance of physical education increases daily. A healthful body is greatly

necessary to a healthful mind; but no one can enjoy that healthfulness without regular exercise; and in youth, strong exercise. The limbs and senses need to be educated. Play—fervent, earnest play—is necessary for youth, not merely as a relaxation of the mind, but as a physical education. The various games in which young people delight are diversified not merely to avoid satiety, but that, by being diversified, they may bring into appropriate exercise every muscle of the body. How is it that boys excel the other sex in vigorous sports? For the simple reason that they learn how to leap and swim, and throw and strike their ball; girls do *not* learn such exercises. For the same reason *they* excel *us* in those tasteful pursuits and pastimes which depend upon facile movements, and delicate manipulations, and refined tastes, to which we have not been trained.

But all are equally called upon to educate their senses,—to train each of them to a perfect use. The fulfilment of their proper functions by exercise, is a necessary part of early education. An infant cannot at first judge of distance, sounds, colours, or proportions. But experience trains him to accuracy in all these respects. A sailor can tell you all about a ship in the distance which your uneducated eye can only just perceive; a chronometer-maker can perfect the minutest parts of his finest movements; a dyer can distinguish the nicest differences in the shades of the most brilliant colours; a musician, the slightest discord in sounds; a geometrician, the smallest disproportion or deviation in *lines*, and angles, and curves; and a painter pronounces

at once on the want of proportion in the drawing, or harmony in the colouring, of a picture. Many of these refinements result from a *professional* education of the senses; but the principle is the same in all. All our senses *need* cultivation; and it is impossible to say to what degree of perfection this culture may be carried, or what may hereafter be most useful. We see remarkable illustrations of the principle in quickness of sight in the deaf and dumb; and in the more extraordinary perfection of touch and of hearing in the blind. The blind have been known to distinguish colours by the touch; and their perception of harmony and discord in sound is well known in the proverbial excellence of their music.

But in all these respects we are, in a great degree, self-educated; and although a professional skill may not be desired, yet proficiency should be sought. I instance especially the education of the hand. Its uses are of infinite variety; and a facility in this respect may often be of inconceivable advantage. For a man to be "able to turn his hand to anything," as the phrase runs, is to be able indefinitely to multiply his own amusements and advantages. I would have you to cultivate this faculty. It will cleave to you through life, and tend greatly to make you independent of others, and master of your own circumstances.

And especially will your resources and pleasures be augmented, if you also educate the eye to the correctness of geometry, and to the beauties of form and colour. No one who has read can ever forget the instructive story

in the *Evenings at Home*, "Eyes and no Eyes." The *art of seeing* is of immense value, and is an inexhaustible pleasure, though little cultivated. When you are at home, read books; when you are abroad, read men, and study nature. Almost every one you meet has some point, some trait of character worthy of your notice. All events are full of truths; and you may find "sermons in stones," and "books in the running brooks;" for universal nature is full of materials for observation, for thought, for enjoyment, for profit. The clear sky, in its depths of blue,—or as it is embossed with every form of tinted cloud at sunrise or sunset,—furnishes materials for the imagination. There you may deliciously lose yourself by sailing far into the depths of space; or you may pile stepping-stones of molten gold and silver, up to the very throne of heaven's light and glory. Is it nothing to mark the bold outline of lofty mountains, and the undulations of the lowlier hills! What a feast to the eye in the diversified aspects of nature! Here, the swelling upland, dotted over with flocks and herds that wander or rest. Or there, the vast plain, with its orchards, and corn-fields, and deep pastures. How rich the pleasure of observing the various foliage; or to mark the alternate effects of light and shadow; to trace the silvery stream as it dances on its course,—now retiring from observation as if in virgin modesty; and then bursting full into view in some bold cascade, to assert its independence! How delightful to sit upon the hill-side, and witness the stir of the village *beneath*; to catch the mingled sounds of the lowing of

the herds, and the bleating of the flocks, and the barking of the shepherd's dog, and the cheerful song of the milk-maid, and the shout of merry children, and the whistle of the late-returning plough-boy, and the graver note of the wearied labourer, and the soft minstrelsy of the last songsters of the grove, and the sighing of the evening gale as it murmurs through the stirred foliage of the nearest trees; and as all these are blended, and yet distinguishable, and fill the ear without oppressing the sense,—what a luxury of enjoyment! Surely the faculties of seeing and hearing are not bestowed in vain, when instruction can come so pleasantly, and pleasure can yield so much instruction.

But on how many thousands of minds are all these varieties and enjoyments utterly lost! Lessons and occasions of gratitude are bestowed in vain. Beautiful flowers invite the hand, and remain unplucked! a rich harvest of truth and pleasure bends to the sickle, and is not reaped! Let me persuade, let me entreat you, wisely to educate your senses. Everywhere you will find proofs of the wisdom and benevolence of God, that will excite your gratitude and joy; and often the moments of silent rapture will be marked by that tear of gladness, which is the peculiar luxury of a tasteful and devotional mind. And you will find this habit of the greatest service in increasing your love of nature; in withdrawing you from the unwholesome excitement of the great city; in inspiring you with sympathy with all that lives and is; in making your heart soft; and in teaching you how to find God everywhere and in all things.

Close observation, thus become habitual, will teach you the true philosophy, and fill your memory, like a painter's portfolio, with beautiful images, on which you can dwell with the greater delight since they are sketched by your own hand; and which you can employ with higher advantage, as they have already suggested pleasing analogies.

This portion of education, the art and habit of observation, has the great advantage, that every advance will increase the power of your faculties, and render the habit more easy, more fruitful, and more pleasurable. This remark, it is true, will apply to every other part of education. Facility and beauty of writing is only to be attained by careful and constant practice, and that in reference to every point. If every letter but three were carefully studied and written in youth, and *they* were always written with utter carelessness, the certain result would be that those letters would be ill-formed throughout life. So if a youth were to aim at rapid writing, before he had learnt to form his letters perfectly, no practice would ever enable him to write well. It is the same in every department of learning. In arithmetic, the first rules are all-important: every subsequent attainment rests on the correctness and rapidity with which they are practised. The highest calculations in mathematics are dependent upon these vulgar rules.

The value of discipline is found in these habits of correctness and dispatch, with regard to every intellectual exercise and pursuit. The great point is the habit of undivided *attention.* Nothing can be gained without it, and almost everything with it. Capacities may vary;

but close, entire, calm, persevering application will surmount almost every difficulty. Want of memory is, in the majority of cases, want of attention. The diversion of the mind between two or more objects makes everything to be imperfectly learned; all things are read, spoken, received, remembered in fragments; inaccuracy mars what is partially known; an indolence of thought is produced which completely enervates the mind; and a waste of energy, and want of knowledge is the inevitable result.

The habit of committing something to memory every day with perfect accuracy, is a wonderful augmentation of its power, especially in the acquisition of language. If the study of the classics answered no other end than its use in strengthening the memory, it would justify the application of a large amount of time and energy; but these are models of composition and eloquence, and will also supply many noble sentiments and beautiful examples;—sentiments and examples devoid, we grant, of Christian truth and principle, but not generally opposed to them.

The force of this habit of attention is obvious in the character of all great men. Mr. Wesley explained the fact of his accomplishing so large an amount of work, by one maxim, "I do one thing at once, and I do it heartily." And as he said on another occasion, "I am in too much haste to be in a hurry." An eminent living man, who has accomplished herculean labours, explained all by the same principle,—"by being a *whole man* to one thing at a time." If you intend to reach, I will not

say greatness, but mediocrity, you must habituate yourself to the same thing. Give your whole self to the present work: now the Scriptures; now the classical lesson; now mathematics; now the work of present duty; now play;—let each in its turn employ your whole man, and your whole man will in turn be strengthened for the largest amount of exertion.

Intimately connected with these remarks, is the subject of an habitual improvement of time. With a deep conviction of its value, you cannot squander it, you cannot let it run to waste. A great economist of time gave this rule, and fully illustrated it,—"Never be unemployed; never *while away* time." This is a great besetment of youth. They think all freedom from direct control and rule a license for amusement, and for the baneful luxury of doing nothing. Experience should teach you that there is less pleasure in a stagnant state of mind, than in the hour of its severest exercise. Even amusement, to be a profitable relaxation, must be pursued with vigour.

> "Absence of occupation is not rest;
> A mind quite vacant is a mind distrest."

Lose no passing opportunity; buy up every moment; deem it more precious than gold. And remember that life, the nucleus of your eternity, is made up of fragments of time. You may not find opportunity to accomplish everything you wish; but you may, by self-impulse, and by patient, untiring effort, do all you ought to attempt. And here let me remind you that nothing can exceed in importance the habit of early rising. If we examine the

list of great men of every age, we shall find that they have been generally distinguished by this practice. And it is inconceivable how great advantage the habit furnishes in calmness and self-possession, in securing punctuality and order, and in the larger amount of work which a man can perform day by day.

Let me urge you to form in yourselves the habit of just reasoning. There is a natural logic which is the gift of God, and not dependent upon artificial moods and syllogisms; and this faculty may be largely cultivated without much artificial help; but certainly not without the habit of *reflection*. You must "consider not who speaks, but weigh well what is spoken." To read fast is a temptation to children of all growths; but to digest what we have read, so as to form distinct ideas upon every topic, and to possess ourselves of the subject in hand, so as to "weigh well" what we read, is the only path of knowledge, and the certain, and only certain mode of strengthening all our faculties. I grant it is a most exhausting process; but he who never exerts himself to the point of fatigue, will never possess great strength, or fully enjoy the true luxury of rest. Well-digested ideas on fewer subjects, are infinitely preferable to a rapid, sketchy, superficial acquaintance with a vast variety of things, of which nothing is known deeply and thoroughly; and a sound and solid judgment, to one which must ever be vacillating and infirm, because it has never become qualified to be independent.

If you would keep pace with the general intellectual progress, you must be able to reciprocate with society,

and to communicate your thoughts, both in conversation and in writing. The art of conversing well is generally the improvement of a gift. We meet with instances where men, full of knowledge and wisdom, are almost helpless in conversation, although they can write well; and others who can talk excellently, and yet cannot compose an essay or a letter fit for perusal. I can only urge you to strive to excel, and never to despair of full success. Dr. Johnson says that he attained the eminence of his colloquial powers, by always speaking with as much pains to secure correctness and perfection as if he knew that his conversations were to be printed verbatim. Practice can alone give fluency, correctness and power in composition, whether extemporaneous or written; and in an age in which uttered opinions have almost paramount influence, it is of high importance to cultivate the art.

You must not think me an enemy to your intellectual pleasures, or averse to every work of fiction, if I say, discipline your imagination. To be without imagination, in youth especially, is to be phlegmatic. "Give me something to cut off," said a wise teacher; "the remedy for luxuriance is easy; but barren soils are overcome by no labour." Check your wit; repress your humour; curb your fancy; chasten your imagination. Seek imagery in the paths of truth alone; for you will find it skirted, on either side, with modest and sweet flowers. Beware of doubtful novels and romances, especially the trash which comes upon us like an avalanche, in our cheap serials and popular libraries. These furnish a powerful stimulus to the imagination and passions of the young and weak,

whose minds are incapable of digesting stronger meat, but who are thereby rendered less and less fit to read these works of fiction. Such works caricature human nature and human life, vice and virtue; and exhaust in a fictitious world the sympathies which are needed for that which is real. They make day dreamers, who are a trouble to themselves and a plague to society.

On the contrary, cultivate good intellectual habits; a quick observation of men and things, regulated by a sober judgment, resting on revealed truth, calm reasoning, and a wise experience. Educate your senses, and all your powers, so as to have within yourselves the highest faculties of enjoyment and acquisition. A first-rate man of science will make large discoveries with a small amount of apparatus. Quick in perception, be slow in judgment; reason with care and impartiality; and be more anxious about the correctness than the amount of your knowledge. Above all, reflect upon your responsibility in the use of time, and the employment of all your faculties; and you shall prove that in all these respects, "it is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth."

I have already indicated an important—the most important, branch of my subject:—the depravity of human nature demanding a vigorous moral discipline. Your moral faculties are clearly distinguishable from your intellectual powers; and are obviously designed to guide your whole course through the present life. Conscience is supreme; and when enlightened by the revealed will of God, is to be the director of reason; and reason, thus instructed, is to be the guide of life.

The first branch of good moral habits is the government of your appetites. Your opportunity may be small for gratification, and yet the duty must have a place. Is any sight so humiliating as to see a man in bondage to his appetite? unable to resist the wine when it moveth itself aright, or the dish that is tempting, but known to be dangerous? They may not yet be called drunkards or gluttons, but they are genteel sensualists, and dwell in the midst of perils to their virtue.

In your conduct towards your fellows and your superiors, you will form habits which will probably always cleave to you. Indeed, a school furnishes a true microcosm,—it is a little world—an epitome of the great world into which you are soon to enter. As you behave here, you will most probably behave there; and you may now, by discipline and habit, make yourselves almost what you will.

The great rule of social morality may be wrought into a habit with you: to do unto others as you would they should do unto you. This will lead to true politeness; and the avoidance of all that is boisterous and discourteous, will improve your kindness of disposition. A loud voice and rough manners may *sometimes* hide a kindly disposition; but it is the rare exception, and is not adapted to win our confidence and love.

"Temper is everything," was the title of a tract which impressed me when a child. Be masters of yourselves.

The law of *justice* must be paramount with you. The principle is sacred, and must be inviolable at all costs. *You* have the same kind of temptation to violate its stern

requirements at school, that men have in the world. To cheat in play ; to rue your bargain ; to forget your promise, or to deny it because it is inconvenient or against your interests ; and to employ force or fraud to deprive another of his rights,—these are trials of virtue common to both. But cultivate and maintain an unflinching and even costly integrity. Part with all your resources for play and for enjoyment, rather than cheat or be dishonourable. The habit now fixed of being nicely just and faithful, will be permanent ; and if it be founded upon the evangelical fear of God, it will be an infinitely better principle of commercial integrity than that mean maxim of worldly morality, "Honesty is the best policy."

Akin to the habit of justice is that of *truth*. A caricature is false although it has much truth in it. Habituate yourselves to the love of *strictest* truth. In stating facts, in relating anecdotes, in describing emotions, beware of variations and over-statements. In the smallest deviations, you cannot plead that you will not be detected : you are already self-detected, and think meanly of yourself if you depart from truth. And, above all, there is upon you the glance of an Eye that is a witness ; and the same glance at some future day will recall the falsehood, either for bitter repentance, or for final punishment. "Dare to be true ; nothing can need a lie."

Even in youth, benevolence, kindness, and good-will may become a habit, by taking pleasure in another's happiness or success, and by discarding all the arts of littleness and self-seeking. Acts of minor cruelty will

destroy all benevolence. He who loves to torment dumb animals, or to persecute those over whom he has power, may, when fully educated, become a second Nero.

Thus may the most valuable moral habits be formed and sustained in your youth, as a happy preparation for the sterner duties of mature life. There is one principle which lies at the root of all, and which I am bound to make prominent and emphatic: *the absolute necessity and supreme importance of submission to authority.* Authority must be regarded simply as such, if true obedience is to be yielded at all, and especially in youth. Yours is the age of submission, by the appointment of God, and by the necessity of the case. Children are to obey their parents in all things, and, by parity of reason, their tutors and governors. You have not wisdom and experience to know what is good for you; and you have not firmness to govern yourselves by wise and necessary rules. You must, therefore, take the wisdom and laws of others, as the proper help, guide, security, for your own inexperience and infirmity. Respect authority, therefore, as the ordinance of God; "for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." All that is now required of you, is required on deliberation and conviction, and an affectionate regard to your real welfare; and all is so regulated as to allow you the largest amount of personal liberty and enjoyment compatible with the great ends of your real education.

And this leads me to say, once more, cultivate the habit of *being happy*. You may smile, as if it were an *un*reasonable injunction; but we may *learn* to be happy,

as we may form the habit of being dissatisfied and miserable. You cannot control all outward circumstances, but you may greatly modify their effects upon your own spirit. A naturally buoyant and happy disposition, is a great advantage; but habitual temper is greatly the result of education. Many injudicious parents spoil the temper of their children; some by the extreme of indulgence, and others by severity. It is in your power to learn to take little crosses, and accidents, and unkindnesses, with cheerful patience; to look at the bright side of everything; to expend no more feeling upon unpleasant things than their importance demands; to repress your sensitiveness; to shake off melancholy and dissatisfaction; and to dwell on subjects that minister most to cheerfulness. A parent has no greater social joy than in the rational happiness of his family; and although you may often find it difficult to feel that *here* is your *home*, that this is your family, and that the school "is your father, and mother, and sister, and brother,"—yet *here* you may be happy; and a good, honest, hearty *determination*, will wonderfully tend to foster the habit which I thus earnestly recommend.

And now, my dear young friends, on what, as a sure foundation, must this whole superstructure of good physical, mental, and moral habits rest? Can such results flow from mere human education and self-discipline? Much, we grant, may be done by these human appliances; much more than is generally imagined, as we see especially in the effects of culture among those who wholly rely upon human sufficiency, rejecting the doctrine of Divine

influence. But these schemes, tried by a just standard, are unsound; their results are factitious. We can account for the failure of all schemes of self-dependence, and the imperfection of the most perfect human virtue. We know that the fountain is bitter; the root is evil; the soil of itself will only produce weeds. In our "flesh dwelleth no good thing." We therefore look for influences from above, purchased for all by the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, and ready to be bestowed upon all diligent cultivation of human nature, in answer to believing prayer. No natural amiableness, no conventional virtue, can supersede the necessity of a Divine regeneration. Diligent toil, continual watchfulness, earnest prayer, habitual self-denial, seeking God in all things,—will fix and perfect in you all that is good.

Let me urge upon you the habitual fear of God. Cultivate a profound sense of His presence,—of His majesty and purity. Have constant regard for His will and His glory. This is the prime element of morality and religion. Our national laws so regard it; for the common culprit is said not to have had the "fear of God before his eyes." Without it there is no penitence; and without penitence there is no piety. It is thus the Psalmist brings to a practical conclusion his sublime descant upon the omnipresence and omniscience of God,—"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Habitual devotion in the perusal of the Word of Truth, *meditation*, and prayer, will imprint deep convictions of

the value of the Scriptures, and furnish you to every good word and work. Read regularly; read broadly, so as to compass the argument; read carefully, so as to observe the force of words fitly spoken—apples of gold in pictures of silver; read prayerfully, so as to secure the aid of that Holy Spirit by whom the word was given. Make yourselves familiar with the book of Proverbs, which will furnish to you, as men of business, the wisest counsel, and will establish your goings. Evangelical religion is practical religion. Steep your minds in the doctrines of the New Testament. Remember, that all revealed truth is a revelation *of* God, as well as *from* God; and that its proper tendency is to lead the heart *to* God. His truth will *assure* you, when all else is incertitude; it will *cheer* you when you have no other comfort; it will *strengthen* you when you are faint.

In conclusion, let me remind you, that your character is all that is properly *your own*. Every other possession must be foregone; nothing else can be permanently retained. This *lives*,—lives *for ever!* Divine transformation of soul secures a future transformation of body, at the resurrection of the just. And this great change draws after it the fulness of eternal life. Heaven alone can be a home for the good. Its purity and bliss is the only element suited to the Christian's nature; and the only meet recompense of his evangelical righteousness. Are you called to perpetual self-denial? The habit of subjugating the senses shall find its reward in the freshness, purity, and fulness of the water of life, and in the sweetness of the unforbidden fruit; in the music which shall

fill every breeze with melody; and in the ever-heightening glories of heaven, of which the intensest brightness of earth is but the shadow. Are you called to a high morality? The habits by which the Christian is formed to all the duties of society and of holy brotherhood, shall be perfected in the everlasting fellowship of the saints under a visible Theocracy, where the law of love centres all in One. Are you called to high fellowship with God? The habits of devotion and sacrifice and obedience shall find their true aliment in communion with the Archetype of beauty, the Ineffable Goodness, the Fountain of Holiness, the Sum of all perfection. Then the mind, now yearning after truth, and instinctively grasping for the Infinite, shall reach that it sought for; and the heart, ever longing for rest, shall anchor in a quiet haven. The happiness of a religious life shall issue in heavenly beatitudes; the fruit of forgiving shall be found in everlasting forgiveness; and the harvest of Christian charity shall be reaped in eternal love. THE WORK OF RIGHTEOUSNESS SHALL BE PEACE; AND THE EFFECT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS QUIETNESS AND ASSURANCE FOR EVER.

LECTURE II.—YOUNG MEN: THEIR DANGERS AND DUTIES.

(Delivered in Oldham-Street Chapel, Manchester, on Monday evening, May 25th, 1846.)

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,

I AM called to address you as *young men;* and that fact suggests a variety of topics, both of association and reflection, whether I consider you individually or relatively.

The question naturally arises, Who are the persons whose interests are this evening specially regarded? Who are young men?

The term is indefinite, but it is of less importance to prescribe an age, than to point out the characteristics of the state.

We refer especially to the period when direct parental guidance and influence are less the rule and motive than in the days of mere boyhood; and when the youth begins to think he can safely direct much of his own conduct: when he wishes fully to act for himself, prescribing his own laws, choosing his own pursuits, forming his own associations, and executing his own plans. This

appears to be the commencement of that new era—the life of a young man. He wishes, if not for entire independency and freedom from control, at least for individuality, and a wider range of personal liberty. At this period, only judicious, faithful, affectionate parents, who have retained their hold of the heart, and secured habitual submission to their authority as both wise and kind, just and right,—only such can continue to *govern* young men; avoiding the extremes of harsh vexation and loose indulgence. Except in such happy cases as these, parental hold is lessened just when its influence is most needed for direction and restraint. It is the time of the youth's transition from the passive to the active state; when passion and imagination are strong, and develop more quickly than reason does; when there is little experience, and only scanty observation; when there is much hope, and little suspicion. All is bright in the future; and the past has left no scars,—has inflicted no wounds. Experience is the mother, and caution the daughter of fear; but the youth is yet a stranger to trouble, and has known no sorrows but those of childhood, which are light and evanescent, and are shaken off "like dew-drops from the skylark's wing."

It is now that the young man begins to be differently regarded at home, all the family looking upon him as emerging from the chrysalis state of boyhood, and beginning to occupy a new sphere, and a new social element. Parents allow him a degree of liberty of action to which he was formerly a stranger; partly because they wish to see the power and bent of his mind, and partly

from parental pride; and other members of the family sink command into request, and now only suggest, where formerly they dictated. Sisters especially, are lavish in kindness and praise; and the half-fledged young man is in imminent danger of pride and vanity. He holds a new position in reference to the world. He enters upon its business; he associates with men; he begins to do what is manly. If he has really more to learn, it is less *like* learning; the formality of the school has passed away; there is more of diversity, more of action, and more of education. Every thing around him impresses, modifies, and touches with a new power, the hidden springs of life.

The period, thus generally defined, may be spoken of loosely as including the years from fifteen to twenty-one, and is most full of danger, of interest, and of great and lasting consequences. It is the time when most thoughtful care is needed, and when, usually, least is given. Young men are in danger of being the care of no one. Ministers have not usually bestowed as much attention upon them as upon children. Yet, on every consideration, they ought to be their special care.

Young men greatly need ministerial exhortation and instruction. The reasons which urge us, are considerations which deeply concern you. *As a class,* you form a large proportion of our congregations, and you are therefore numerically important. You have each an immortal spirit. You are endowed with high capabilities,—you possess a glorious nature. In each of you there is a combination of mysteries, a union of extremes; of inert,

unconscious matter, and of a spiritual substance, allied to angels and to God.

You are each a bundle of sympathies,—of attractions and repulsions. In you resides vast power, as in the secret treasury of the winds, for good or for evil. It will come forth! and its proper cultivation and right direction is a high duty to yourselves and to others. It is yours to mark the operations, and to penetrate the secrets of nature; to weigh the earth, and span the heavens; to study life in all its forms; to plunge into the depths of metaphysical speculations; to expound the laws

> —— "which lead Orion forth,
> And wheel Arcturus round the north;"

and to determine the bounds of those stars, which look but like golden dust profusely scattered upon the sapphire floor of His pavilion whose "throne is high and lifted up."

The very contemplation of such a nature as you possess should fill you with solemn fear, and with noble thoughts. *You* are capable of what you know to be in human nature. You are capable of philosophy, of poetry, of sentiment; of noble designs, and of nobler actions. You are capable of pleasures,—not merely sensual and debasing,—or dreamy and evanescent;—but those that are intellectual and pure and sublime. You are capable of God,—of knowing the Great Author, the benevolent and wise Governor of all things,—the All in all. This is your high prerogative,—TO KNOW GOD: not in an abstract notion that there is an "Uncaused Cause

of all causes;" not resting in the vestibule of a visible creation, or spiritualizing a heathen conception, until a dreamy, filmy imagination,—a variable notion,—becomes a substitute for the God of Revelation; nor in a mere collection of moral attributes, which reason may approve as a part of the Divine nature, but which as conceptions of God are totally ineffective upon the heart. You may know the God of the Bible, directly and to your soul's comfort; God brought into your business and made sensible to your hearts: not approached by piling up systems of philosophy as stepping-stones to His throne; nor worshipped by a beautiful and poetical sentimentality as a meet offering to the Archetype of beauty and the Source of good; but known and accessible to sinners through faith in a crucified Saviour. You may say, "This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death." Your highest object, and your greatest gain, is this knowledge; for "this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent."

This stamps you with true dignity, with incalculable value. This makes you precious in His sight. And because He has set His love upon you, He has redeemed you at a price "all price beyond." Dwell, I beseech you, upon the questions,—What am I? for what was I born? what ought I to be?—until you are fully possessed and overpowered by a sense of your position in the scale of creation, and are filled with purposes suitable to your glorious nature and destiny.

We regard you also, and you must likewise consider

yourselves, in your *relation to society*. Your home was your first sphere of influence, your first theatre of moral action. Your first cries, your earliest movements, deeply affected the hearts of your parents, and of many others. Those who watched your early actions, and tolerated your eccentricities, and errors, and waywardness, felt that you impressed their hearts. As your sun ascended, it shed a more direct and potent influence upon your family circle, and especially upon your brothers and sisters. You served, with other domestic agencies, to modify their character;—to exasperate or soften, to refine or debase them,—to give countenance or discouragement. And that influence is not now less, but greater than formerly; especially upon the junior members of the family. Your presence inspires fear or confidence, affection or dislike. You will either aid or hinder the good influence of your parents. Your conduct will be observed, and your spirit will affect your juniors, for good or evil, far more than you can now conceive. I may say that your influence upon your sisters, and their reciprocal influence, will be especially great. The natural tendencies of affection to sisters are all virtuous. Here you have the beauty and bliss of love towards one of the other sex, without thorns or dangers. The entire tendency is in favour of delicacy and refinement of sentiment. It is the earliest and purest expression of this class of affections. It is the school of the heart; and in the formation of the moral character is second only to the influence of parental love. In several important respects it is auxiliary to a wise parent's designs; for it is the

influence of affection alone, without authority. Sisters do not attempt to rule you, unless exceptionally. You will mould their character by your conduct and spirit. They are more plastic, you have more sternness. They are more apt to look up to, and to lean upon you; you are more disposed to use power upon them. But endeavour to use your power discreetly. Let them find you virtuous, noble, ingenuous, faithful, and you will be to them a tower of strength; your home will ever be a school of virtue, and the seat of peace.

But you will also influence, for good or evil, multitudes besides. You have now gained a position in social and civil life; you associate with other families, and especially with their younger branches. In the presence of the aged, the young generally feel restraint; but with their compeers they are at liberty. Here, therefore, you appear in your real character. Here is a large field of opportunity and power. You are thrown much together for social intercourse; perhaps in a summer evening's ramble, or around the winter's fire-side; and you mingle in the familiar chat of the work-table, or join in the pleasures of music, or in other delightful interchanges of domestic life. All these associations and passing incidents are full of mutual influence. As the pebbles on the sea-beach change each other's shape and size by the action of the restless waves, so your constant intercourse will reciprocally affect you, rounding off many peculiarities, and mutually shaping each other's character. And indeed, the perpetual influence of ordinary circumstances serves far more to form our character than do great

events; just as the products of the earth are not the result of great convulsions and extraordinary powers, but of that gentle influence of spring which opens the bosom of nature, and everywhere diffuses life, fertility, and beauty. A sentiment casually dropped,—an argument pursued only for the sake of prowess and victory,—a smart repartee,—a quick glance of the eye,—a smile that passes away with the occasion,—all make a definite impression, and often give a bias for good or evil, and leave lasting effects. While you are forming your own character, you are also forming the character of others. We educate each other; and action educates more effectually than doctrine instructs.

You associate in the various pursuits of business. And its gravity, and possibly even its mere mechanism and toil, may not altogether exclude a lighter mood,—an occasional hilarity, which may often renew the elasticity of your spirits. Your diligence, your probity and truthfulness, your generosity of heart, your cheerfulness under labour and trial, may all serve to make a deep impression on others, as they are sure to give character, and likely to bring success, with the blessing of heaven, to yourselves.

Some of you are perhaps engaged in literary and scientific pursuits; and may sometimes be tempted to enter upon the dangerous arena of intellectual gladiatorship. But while you only think to amuse yourselves by the trial of your skill in the defence of a false theory, you may easily forget how much you are disregarding the *supremacy* of truth, and lowering the pulse of your

attachment to it alone. You may easily forget that arguments for error and false theories find readier entrance, and more certain lodgment than arguments for their confutation, especially when religion and morality are concerned. You may easily forget that you are influencing the minds of others to become indifferent as to which side of a question they espouse, and to love victory more than truth. You lessen your own consciousness of rectitude, and open the door for other departures from truth and virtue; for he who can employ dishonest arguments, or avow opinions he does not entertain, may soon learn to appropriate other things not his own; and to justify, in other branches of morality, what, in his heart, he cannot but condemn. Such a course of arguing leads to the love of mere speculation, the object of which is not the discovery of truth, but the ingenious defence of theories, for the reputation of cleverness and victory. But there is no reason for your being honest and honourable in commerce *for the sake of earthly wealth*, which has not tenfold force in reference to immortal truth, *the riches of eternity*. I hope better things of you; but I know the danger of a spirit of disputation. When men cease to love and pursue truth for its own sake, they soon become theorists, visionaries, latitudinarians, and sceptics. Maintain truth at any cost: "buy the truth, and sell it not."

But I must remind you of your importance, as a class, *to our Churches*. You are doing a great portion, and will soon do a greater, of the good or ill effected in our world. If you should be positively evil in your influence,

how incalculable the mischief! How much may *one* of you effect! Even your negation of vital religion is an immense evil, and will influence numbers around you. You will form a sort of nucleus to the irreligious and undecided, keeping them in heart against the efforts of Ministers and Christian friends. But if you are positively good,—if, happily, you are connected with Christian institutions, with Sabbath-schools, with Tract and Missionary Societies,—you are doing a great work;—you are influencing many minds,—forming many characters to truth and virtue, and depositing precious seed for an imperishable harvest.

Every view of your numbers, characters, capabilities, connections, and influence, shows the importance of your being taught, and trained, and cared for, and fitted by every means and appliance for your great work.

But further: we derive a high consideration from *the character of the times* in which we live. It is the age of great cities, of great enterprises, of great progress, of great good, and of great dangers. You, my young brethren, inherit a vast patrimony. The times have not been formed *by* you, but *for* you. "Other men laboured, and ye have entered into their labours." All ages are necessarily different from each other, and we are concerned to understand wherein our own age differs from the preceding. A grand peculiarity of our times is the progress of science, of civilization, and of Christianity. These are not identical. Science may be cultivated, and civilization be promoted, to a degree, with*out* Christianity; but Christianity must be the basis of

universal and permanent good. She is the parent and defender of liberty, mental and civil, and the security of every blessing.

You live in times when Christianity, science, and civilization, have effected the greatest changes in the aspect and relations of society. You need not to look back upon more than one generation in the history of our own country and the world, to see that you are reaping an immense harvest of material good.

But a much greater influence is derived from those agencies which are moral. They are more patent, although less observed. Who can conceive the effects of the freedom of the press,—the advancement of education among the poorer classes,—the unrestricted circulation of the Word of God,—and the preaching of a pure, Protestant faith, upon the general opinions of mankind, the power of governments, the liberty of the subject, the tone of public and private morals, and the ordinary intercourse of society?

Finally, upon this part of our subject, *the actual relation of many of you to the Church*, endows you with great interest and responsibilities. A few years ago, many were in the position of some of you,—obscure young men, with few opportunities or means of usefulness. They have already attained a middle position. Many of our venerated fathers have passed from the stage of action since we came upon it. We shall soon follow them, and you will soon follow us. We are anxious for ourselves and you to be like John, who "fulfilled his course;" to hand down the deposit of truth and privilege, not

damaged by our keeping; to leave the Church and the world in a condition of growing intelligence and improvement. You will soon be the pillars which, humanly speaking, must bear up the temple of God. Upon you must soon devolve the work of the world's evangelization. You have larger opportunities and more abundant resources than your fathers had. Your facilities are immense; your work is honourable and glorious; your responsibilities are tremendous. Previous ages, many generations of men, have waited on you. Vast periods of time, and wonderful arrangements of Divine Providence, have been employed in preparing your work. All the past has been a breaking up of the fallow ground, that you may sow in righteousness, and reap in mercy.

The nations of the earth, in effect, are looking up to the young men of the Church. The churches of your fathers look to you with anxiety, with desire, and with hope. Great events will soon crowd into small space. All things are even now ready. The claims of Christ and of the world, can only be met by vigorous and united action; and that must be by *individual* action. Each must gird himself for the war. You can only fit yourselves for the service by thoughtful earnestness, by an intelligent zeal, by calm determination, and self-sacrificing devotedness. Survey your position, your duties, your resources, and be resolved; or you will only sleep out a useless life, busy in frivolities, and frivolous in business. Let it be written as with a pen of iron upon your inmost spirit,—"I am bound to serve God by serving my generation. Whether *others* feel the obligation or not, *I* must feel it: whether

others act upon it or not, *I* must act upon it. No more unprincipled harmlessness,—no more negative goodness. I may not live to myself: it is a violation of the grand law of my being. I must rise to the times. I must cultivate a noble ambition. I must live to purpose. I *must* do some good in the world. I must give myself to God, and to His Church."

These are the only fitting and noble sentiments, worthy of you and of your position. Who, I ask, are now guiding the great affairs of this world? Who are the present lights of the Church? Men who, yesterday, were in the position of some of you: to-morrow you must be in theirs. Neither they nor you can continue stationary: they must decrease; you will increase. The onerous duties of life will soon be fully yours. The events which are to fill up many pages in the future history of the world, are first to be written out by your actions. This town is to be what you shall make it. This vast and increasing empire is to be what the young men of England shall make it. You who belong to our own Church will soon be shaping the destiny of Methodism. The Churches of Protestantism will have a waning or an increasing glory, as you shall or shall not become spiritual, practical, aggressive Christians. The Ministry may do much;—but if the members of the Church be worldly in their spirit, intent chiefly on the possession and influence of wealth,—they will assuredly become "proud, . . . doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth,

supposing that gain is godliness." Secularity of spirit, indifferentism, false religions, practical scepticism, and ruin, are the rapid changes which we may know, if a generation of men should arise who shall not take up the work of Protestantism and of Christianity, where their fathers have left it, and prosecute it with equal zeal and devotion. The greatest curse which could befall this nation, would be the Divine withdrawal of the spirit of simplicity and devotedness from the Church. Darkness would soon overshadow the land; confusion would enter our councils; and national judgments would loudly proclaim and deeply avenge our national sins.

I trust, however, that you, my young brethren, are resolved; that you only want to know your duty to do it, —to see your resources, to avail yourselves of them. Not seeking great and violent changes, "not *given* to change," you will rather desire to renovate society in the old-fashioned way, by the influence of Christianity, than by any Utopian theory, and the failing remedies of physicians of no value. And in your Churches, you will be anxious to remove great and obvious evils, by vigorously working out your present system; for be assured there are more practical evils produced or aggravated by careless or ineffective administration than by erroneous principles; far more evils arise from moral causes than originate in questions of constitution and polity.

BRETHREN, YOU MUST ACT. 'T is infinitely more noble to *do* a little good in the world than to be the author of many learned but useless speculations. Learn to prefer *work* to praise; prefer the honour of teaching a few

ragged, uncared-for children to read; of distributing a few religious tracts at the homes of the ungodly; of praying beside the couch of a dying man, reaching to him a cup of cold water, and wiping away the clammy sweat of death from his forehead,—to all the applause you could win by the most eloquent teaching of philosophy, or the highest deeds of daring. Action, with a simple aim to promote the glory of God and the welfare of mankind, will give you higher, purer, healthier pleasure than speculation or applause; and will more certainly confirm your principles, and perfect the graces of your character.

But it is needful that you should be put upon your guard against surrounding evils and hindrances, and instructed how best to qualify yourselves for the right discharge of the duties which devolve upon you.

I. You must be apprehensive of *the dangers of your age and station.*

"Young men exhort to be sober-minded." They are generally wild, careless, full of passion, imaginative and visionary, devoid of sound judgment and experience, opinionative, heady, apt to trust the world, and to expect great things from it. "The Apostle's idea is that they should be entreated to be prudent, and discreet, and serious in their deportment; to get the mastery over their passions and appetites; and to control the propensities to which youth are subject; and that there should be such self-government, under the influence of religion, as to avoid excess in every thing. A well-governed mind, superior to the indulgence of those

passions to which the young are prone, will express the meaning of the word here. They should be steady in their behaviour, superior to sensual temptations, and constant in the exercise of every part of self-government."

You are now in the midst of danger. Your passions are in their greatest force. You are full of hope and joy. At this period of life, you are in danger of intoxication from the pleasures of sin. Sensual pleasures are rendered attractive, deceitful, seductive, hardening, ruinous, beyond all precedent. There is a refinement in sin that did not belong to olden times, and which renders the distinctions between vice and virtue less striking and impressive than formerly. Sins are baptized with new names; and old and decrepit vices are decked out in purple and fine linen. There is a great change in men's moral feelings in respect of what plain Christianity denounces as dishonourable and sinful. We are benumbed and indifferent. The greatest danger is in the beginnings of evil. Sin is specious; and is always most successful when it commences in what is lawful and good. It first deviates from that which is clearly innocent to what is doubtful, and then to what is guilty and ruinous. Shall I illustrate my meaning, and thus warn you of the beginnings of sin?

What can be more innocent than music, as a domestic recreation and enjoyment? Yet by a gradual descent of abuse it may soon become associated with great evils, ending with dissipation and ruin.

Again: there is first, a known suppression of truth, or

a designed colouring of facts; then a slight equivocation, accompanied with a blush of conscious guilt. The painfulness of falsehood wears off, and we have habitual dissimulation; and the young man ends with the odious and contemptible character of a confirmed liar.

Here is a young man who seeks pleasure on the Lord's day. He falls into the company of some who have more money, or less principle, than himself; and whose extravagant habits he has not the means of following; but, for various reasons, he wishes still to keep their society. What shall he do? With some scruples, he borrows from his master's till, with the full intention of soon repaying it. But the fine bloom of virtue is gone; he has entered into temptation; the fatal act is done. How can *he* repay who is spending beyond his means? and that in order to keep pace with companions who do not limit themselves after this sort. This borrowing becomes theft; and either detection, with disgrace, and loss of place, character, and virtue, produces recklessness or despondency; or temporary success petrifies all moral feeling, and one act of misappropriation becomes the parent of felony, remorse, and ruin.

Another, perhaps religiously educated, has accustomed himself to talk lightly on sacred subjects; and soon he learns to speak irreverently of God. He then substitutes some slang word as a sort of conventional oath. But this soon leads to swearing and profanity, so habitual that he is unconscious of its frequency; and he ends as a blasphemer.

Once more. A young man is fond of companionship;

he dreads sobriety and seclusion, and has depended so much upon society for the oblivion of serious thought, that he has no resources in his books or his home. He seeks kindred spirits; hilarity leads to wine and the tavern for unrestrained jovial mirth; wine leads to occasional drunkenness, and that to the neglect of business, to recklessness, sottishness, debauchery, and uncleanness; and he is also ruined.

The beginning of sin is as "when one letteth out water." "Vice is first pleasing,—then it is easy,—then delightful, then frequent,—then habitual,—then confirmed;—then the man is independent,—then he is obstinate,—then he resolves not to repent,—then he dies,—then he is damned!"

Your dangers are insidious and fearful; and the more so because of your buoyancy of spirits, your love of companionship, and your inexperience of the ways of the world, and the deceitfulness of sin. I think I am one of the last to discourage cheerfulness, and a due relaxation from toil; and I would have you form virtuous and pleasing associations. But beware of their dangers. Fix your bounds, both of time and place, in your retired, considerate moments. Do not leave such decisions to be the effect of circumstances; or suppose that, when surrounded by temptations to go beyond the line which experience and religion dictate as safe and happy, you are in a fit state either to consider a moral question, or to act out a self-denying determination. Only fools will laugh at your "stubbornness" in what is right; and if *you* save yourself from the reproaches of your own con-

science, you can afford to be laughed at. You must have recreation; but you must also keep yourselves unspotted from the world. No physical or moral excess will yield permanent enjoyment. Pursue not amusement for its own sake; make it not an end, but use it as a means. Do not substitute pleasure for work, or work merely that you may have the means of enjoying pleasure.

II. You are in imminent danger from *false philosophy.*

The pride of human reason has always been one of the greatest barriers to the progress of Christianity, both by direct opposition, and by perversion of the truth. How many ancient and modern churches have perverted their way by philosophical speculation? And the Gospel is still "to the Greeks foolishness." Reason has a path and region of her own, and vast enough to task her utmost powers. But reason *will* venture out of her own province, dogmatizing on subjects which are *above* reason, although they may not be *contrary* to it. Common sense requires that the uninitiated pupil should submit to the fully-qualified teacher; and experience shows that in a multitude of instances in ordinary matters of science and philosophy, many things must be received by the pupil on the testimony of the teacher, which afterwards he may himself be better able to comprehend. So is it required of philosophy, that when the subject is out of its own province, or beyond its reach, it should at once submit to the just and supreme authority of the Divine Oracle. But its pride is to "intermeddle with *all* knowledge;" to make religion,—the grand question of what is the will

and pleasure of the Great Invisible Ruler in reference to the worship, duty, acceptance, and destiny of His creatures, as really and as much a subject of its research, dictation, and rule, as any part of natural philosophy. The principle is vicious and wrong. The RULER must declare His own law; and if He mercifully designs to place transgressors upon a new footing of obligation and duty, of reward and punishment, He alone can determine and reveal what those terms are. If there be a revelation from God, it is plain that it must be infallible and paramount; and the philosophy which contradicts the Scriptures must be false philosophy and vain deceit. It is not an honest course to treat this record as if it were false, as if it were settled that nothing could be said in proof of its Divine origin; or to use its phrases only as you would quote another book, and practically to level its authority with authorities merely human. The honest course would be openly to deny its Divine inspiration and authority; and to grapple boldly with the arguments which have been alleged in support of its claims. Until its defences and proofs have been overthrown, let the wise men of the world at least give it a decent regard; and if it be impregnable, then let the deductions of reason on moral subjects, be first referred to revelation; and where it gives an oracle, let worldly wisdom be wise in not opposing God.

The spirit of a proud, deceitful, and infidel philosophy, has done immense mischief in our own times. I do not refer merely, or chiefly, to the degrading system of Socialism,—a system which as much affects the stability

of thrones, and the well-being of families and of society, as it is atheistically directed against all religions, and the very existence of morals. Nor indeed, do I refer to any professed system of infidelity; but chiefly to that spirit of scepticism which pervades so much of our literature, and so many of our scientific institutions. It is marked especially by two circumstances: first, a practical repudiation of the Christian revelation; a silent neglect, which drops all reference to God, and to revealed truth, however deeply the subject may affect the religious interests and the future destiny of man. And secondly, the dealing out vague insinuations,—putting the deductions of science into an intelligible, though not avowed opposition to the declarations of Scripture,—as if to intimate the superior clearness and certainty of science to Scripture, of philosophy to Christianity. Thus does philosophy raise a masked battery against Divine truth. "The Greeks seek after wisdom; but Christ crucified" is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

Some of these men are knight-errants in philosophy,—young adventurers in the arena of moral speculation; men who can hardly be said to *change* their religious opinions, for they have few formed. They are men who would unsettle every thing, but who can settle nothing; who quarrel with all systems and creeds; and whose consistency is found in their having no system, and no creed; who profess to teach, while they acknowledge that they have determined nothing in their own minds:—men whose religion is an abstraction, whose philosophy is transcendentalism, and whose oratory is a discreet use of

words, which as far as they convey any definite meaning, are often convicted of folly, and involve contradiction. Religion, with all its alleged absurdity, is self-consistent; and with all its alleged ignorance, has far more rationality than this crude philosophy. Let such men at once and fully bow to revelation, in questions of religion and morality, or keep to subjects they do understand, and in the discussion of which they excel; but let them not avail themselves of the credit they derive in their proper province, for the purpose of entangling the young and unwary with flimsy speculations on the most sacred subjects, or of undermining religious conviction, without even the pretence of substituting any tried and rational principles in their stead.

Beware then, of a philosophising religion,—a religion which is not simple and practical,—suited to the most ignorant and most depraved of mankind; which does not rest on facts, and consist mainly of the great doctrines which flow out of these facts, and are suitable to the moral nature and destitution of the universal family of man. Beware of a religion which rejects the humiliating doctrine of universal guilt and depravity, which lightly estimates the turpitude of sin, and looks for virtue as the natural production of the human heart under the culture of education,—thus superseding alike the necessity of a Divine atonement, and the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. A religion which knows no humiliation for the taint of original corruption, and feels no anguish for personal transgression; which makes no fiducial recognition of the sacrifice of the Son of God; and which

assures man that he is his own converter and regenerator,—is not the religion for human nature, is not the religion of the Bible. It may serve to amuse sentimentalists, and unfledged philosophers, and novitiate deists; but the great men of the world, as well as the masses, have found the need of something more real to meet a real case, and something more divine to meet God on terms which He can approve.

Beware lest any man make a prey of you through vain and deceitful philosophy. Be not corrupted from the simplicity of Christ. Take the Gospel as it is testified to you. Bow with reverence and full submission to all its dictates, believing what you cannot comprehend, just as in nature and science you believe in the incomprehensible. The Gospel has its philosophy; it has its depths unsearchable; but saving truth is plain. Its spirit is calm, and solemn, and dignified, and consistent; it is full of beauty, full of sublimity, full of force, and full of goodness. "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world." You need not higher wisdom; and "the meek will He guide in judgment; and the meek will He teach His way."

III. If you would greatly serve the Church, you must aim at *the highest mental improvement.*

Many of our young men have no such aim. They can find time to dress far above their circumstances; they read a few periodicals, and the light literature of the day; they learn to talk with an affectation of argument, or sentimentality, or taste,—in high-sounding phrase,—

and then think themselves clever, and therefore make no effort to improve. Let me affectionately urge you to compare yourselves with those who are greatly your superiors: not for your painful humiliation and discouragement, but to make you really humble under a sense of your deficiencies; and to stimulate your minds by the consideration of a high standard of attainments.

Few young men, especially of those engaged in mercantile pursuits, are disposed to engage in vigorous mental exertion; the chief consideration being, What is most interesting? what most exciting? instead of, What is most useful? what most strengthening? Their staple reading is such as men of intellect fly to as a relaxation? It is not work, but only amusement; not food, but a mere gratification. This habit of desultory reading may occasionally correct a prejudice, or expose a fallacy, or help you to pick up scraps and shreds of science; but it is not the way to obtain substantial acquisitions, or to know any thing perfectly. It is not *such* reading that will make "a full man." It is but a yielding to mental indolence, and a love of pleasure. If your companions were never to converse above this standard, you could never become wise men, or be really the better for their society. One obvious and universal consequence is, to unfit you for diligent and undistracted study. Nothing can be more destructive of intellectual vigour than such vague and undirected reading. It will make you hunger after novelties, while you disregard those profound works which alone can yield wholesome and substantial food.

I have met with few young men who have in early life

yielded to the temptation to pass from one light book to another, from novelty to novelty, revelling only in the luxuries of literature,—who have been able afterwards to escape from the snare. They ask advice with the best of purposes; they even look for a *system* to guide them; but when urged to read some two or three standard works, which, because they require patient thought and continued application, would prove the best corrective to such desultory habits of thought,—they are almost immediately discouraged. Their mental taste is perverted, and their appetite and habits are impaired; and therefore they ask for ease, and crave stimulants and dainties. It is the same at our lectures: as long as some easy and fascinating subject is before them, they flock in large numbers; but when something requiring greater attention and mental effort is introduced, the diminution of our numbers at once tells us who are the men who are willing to exert themselves in order to improve.

Presuming then, that *you* are resolved on making those efforts which are necessary to your success, let me advise you. Do not attempt to pursue every study; do not take too wide a range of subjects; or you will only be smatterers in every thing, and know nothing fully. Be deliberately careful in your choice. First study chiefly what is most suitable to your calling; and next consider what best suits your talents,—your bent of mind,—and your opportunities. Having elected one or two subjects which you deem of primary importance to you just now, either because most fitting to your circumstances and attainments, or because such will be the best discipline

for your mind,—"in fixing, fix." Let nothing divert you from it. It is even better that you should now persevere in a less wise selection, than that you should again vacillate, and waste your decision and energy upon a new subject, with a double probability of being again diverted from it. Consult some competent friend or authority, as to the best treatise on the subject. Go to the best at once, although it may, at first, cost you more time and more money. Let me earnestly advise you to study a few of the best books well, rather than hurry through many volumes. Read slowly, and read aloud; for you will need every advantage, now that you are going, not to *read* merely, but to *study*. Pass not a single paragraph unless you feel that you understand it; nor a single word on which you are in doubt, without referring to a good dictionary. If you would really test your knowledge of your author, try to express his meaning in writing, or at least orally. Never suppose that you *know* what you cannot utter. Do not attempt to read too much at once. Frequently sum up the argument, and see that you have fully possessed yourself of it. And if you have an intelligent companion, of the same tastes, but mentally your superior, converse freely with him on the subject of your reading; and you will then engrave your knowledge upon your memory as with a pen of iron.

Do not begin with large and elaborate schemes of improvement and study; you have not time for them. The multiplication of rules and plans will only encumber you, and render it more probable that you will fail somewhere, *and thus* become discouraged, and give up all. "Do one

thing at once, and do it well," and you will have done much. Redeem the time; work your whole soul into your subject; and calmly persevere, — and you are made a student, and cannot fail to become intellectually wealthy.

I need hardly say anything on the choice of subjects. Of course, natural philosophy will attract you all. It is the region of wonders, of beauty, and of delight. It exhibits the character and perfections of God, as written out by His own hand; and illustrates, but never contradicts, His word. It will refine and exalt your mind, and increase your religious enjoyment. The general principles of science are easily acquired; while all natural philosophy is full of profound truths which require continuous and patient study for their elucidation. Read History, that you may study Providence by the light of truth, and especially of Scripture. Read Biography, that you may know human nature and your own hearts. Read some of our best poets, for the cultivation of your taste, imagination, and sensibility. But let me say, avoid a multiplicity of newspapers and light periodicals; and especially eschew the motley host of novels which teem from our press. The bulk of them are mere garbage. They excite and interest you concerning a world of fiction, until your sympathies and powers are incapable of rightly dealing with the world of fact. They produce a morbid sensibility, give false views of human nature and human life, consume most valuable time, and will seriously impair your intellectual vigour.

But your highest obligation in educational pursuits, is

to bring all your reading to bear upon the better understanding of the Word of God. Nothing can supersede this study,—and it must be a study. Much that you read will directly tend to illustrate the Bible; and your increased vigour of mind, and habits of close thought, will enable you better to "search the Scriptures" to profit. Let the Bible be more to you than a beautiful and favourite classic; make it "the man of your counsel," and its "statutes your song." Strive to grow daily more familiar with its very words. Above all, implicitly bow your judgment to all its declarations, and seek to have your heart fully imbued with its holy and happy spirit.

This devout, unreserved, practical, uniform regard to the Divine Oracles, will have a most beneficial and happy effect upon your mind. It will give you an abiding conviction of the simple, absolute *certainty* of those things wherein you have been instructed. You will have some things *settled*, fixed, invariable,—to which you can refer with the comfortable feeling that they are axioms, demonstrations, self-evident truths. Here you have repose for the intellect, as well as rest for the heart. However you may be driven of fierce winds, here you will always find a safe mooring,—a peaceful and secure haven. Cultivate the habit of instant submission of the understanding to God. Keep to the first principles of the oracles of God. However specious the philosophy of speculative and ardent minds, admit nothing which contradicts or contravenes the Bible. Be old-fashioned enough to have something *fixed*, from which you *will not depart*. The world can offer nothing better: listen to

no offer of anything else. You are sure all is tainted, in which the great principles of Christianity are contradicted; they are only wretched speculations which will not admit the infusion of Divine truth.

I am indeed in great earnest with you on these subjects. I am afraid of you. I am afraid our young men are too much disposed, during their spare hours, to gentle inactivity, rather than hard work. I know you are often exhausted with the long and laborious hours of the day: but I speak to a question which concerns your own character and enjoyment. You are now called to work for yourselves. Deny yourselves in sleep, in pleasure, in fashion, in company, in trifling and unworthy occupations,—and you will find that you have both time and energy yet remaining for self-education. You will attain higher respectability by increased knowledge. It will be a graceful ornament to your character, and will augment your power of doing good. Many of you I know are teachers in Sunday-schools. You ought to be full of knowledge and wisdom, to be prepared to teach children. The character of the times, (when instruction, at least, is progressing, and education, which includes moral training, will soon be extended also,) demands of you a quickened pace, that you may keep before the mass, and guide and bless others. "Keep sound wisdom and discretion: so shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet."

Finally: Let me exhort you to *give yourselves fully to God, and to His Church, in actual service.*

"Whose I am, and whom I serve," ought to be your motto and rule. *Action* is the end of your being,—the law of physical and mental health,—the secret of vigour,—the resolver of doubts,—the spring of joy,—the grand element of Christianity,—and the glory of the Church. You may not live to yourself. The Lord hath need of you. The Church has a work for you to do. Spend not your whole life in preparation. Time is too precious, too scanty, too important, to be thus wasted. It will be better for your personal religion that you should work. It will invigorate your graces. It will prevent or dissipate many temptations. It will save you from depression of spirits, and give you perennial peace and joy. Work for God, and you shall have a healthful and vigorous Christianity; become pusillanimous and inactive, and you will wither and decay.

My dear young friends, I want to see you intent on something worthy of yourselves, and of the Churches to which you belong. Seek out work, and enter upon it without delay. Form high resolves. Repair to your great Refuge in "all prayer." Acknowledge Christ before the world. Depend entirely upon the Holy Spirit for wisdom and strength. And bless God who hath called you to salvation, and usefulness, and eternal life; to Whom "be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages. AMEN."

London: R. Needham, Printer, Paternoster Row.